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THE  
BRITISH PULPIT:

A COLLECTION OF

SERMONS

BY

THE MOST EMINENT DIVINES

OF THE PRESENT DAY.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

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# THE BRITISH PULPIT.

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## THE REVELATION OF THE WRATH OF GOD.

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REV. W. JAY.

ARGYLE CHAPEL, BATH, SEPTEMBER 23, 1834.

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"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."—ROMANS, i. 18.

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SOME parts of the office and the work of ministers are much more pleasing than others. It is delightful to delineate the character of the righteous, and to show the path of the just, which is "as the shining light; which shineth more and more until the perfect day." It is delightful to dwell on the glories and blessedness of the heavenly world, and to hear of our "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light." It is delightful to hold forth God's goodness, shewing him in his abundant mercy, and the exceeding riches of his grace; not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for us all; raising him up from the dead, and giving him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God; exalting him at his own right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins; and sending forth his messengers to compel men to come in, that his house might be filled with inhabitants, and his table furnished with guests.

But our feelings are not to regulate our duties. The truth is, we have no choice; as preachers we are bound—if we would be faithful to our commission, and be free from the murder of souls—we are bound not to shun to "declare all the counsel of God." What says God to Ezekiel? "When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand." This demands, therefore, that, "knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men;" and that some we should endeavour to "save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." Even Paul—who is called

by Augustine "the herald of grace"—even Paul could say that he "shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." And here, says he to the Romans, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

Our reflections will turn this evening on four things: first, the wrath of God; secondly, the revelation of it from heaven; thirdly, the objects against which it is denounced; and, fourthly, the class of victims peculiarly obnoxious to it.

**FIRST THE WRATH OF GOD.** It is no easy thing to speak of wrath in connexion with God. Among us it is known to be a passion; it is well known, also, seldom to be a righteous passion. But it is not a passion in God; "Fury is not in me:" in him it is principle; in him it is the love of order; in him it is a determination to maintain equity; in him it is a resolution to punish sin. It results, therefore, from the perfection of his nature; and is not the effect of cowardice and malignity, but the conviction of judgment. The legislator is not angry when he promulgates his laws: the judge is not in a passion when he pronounces sentence of death on the criminal; yea, it does him honour when he does it with pity and with tears. But the case is, that society cannot be maintained without laws, and laws are nothing without penalties and sanctions. Be assured he is not a Christian, he is not a friend to criminals themselves, who is always railing at criminal jurisprudence, and who would strip it of some of its wholesome severities, in the present state of the world. In all well-ordered countries crime is punished, and must be punished; and can it escape in the empire of a Being who is "righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works?" We discard at once the phrase "vindictive justice," as implying in it hatred, and rancour, and revenge: and we substitute for it "vindicatory justice," or "permissive justice." And this we contend to be essential to the very character of God: we contend that we could not esteem him, nor love him, if we supposed that he viewed equally truth and lies, honesty and injustice, cruelty and benevolence. What would you think of a magistrate who should bear the sword in vain; who, if a "praise to them that do well," would not be "a terror to evil doers;" who, if when he had before him the incendiary who burned down your house, the very murderer who killed your child, should smile and say, "This does not concern me: go in peace?" God is the dictator of the universe, and God is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." "The wicked," he says, "shall not stand in my sight; I hate all workers of iniquity." Therefore, he has in the Scriptures, pronounced a peculiar curse upon the man who presumes upon impunity: "If it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven." So much for *the nature* of this wrath.

But what shall we do with *the dreadfulfulness* of it? Who has courage to pro-

ceed here? And what is to be said here? "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." If "the wrath of a king" be, as Solomon says, as "the roaring of a lion," what must the wrath of God be? "*Who knoweth the power of his anger?*" Can the devils tell us? No, they cannot: they are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day:" and there is as much difference between their present and future state, as between imprisonment and execution. Cannot the damned in hell tell us what is the power of his anger? No, they cannot: they are yet only spirits all the misery that can rush into them through the body, and by the eye, and by the ear—all these parts of woe are necessarily postponed till after the resurrection, for want of a system of organization to receive them. "Who knoweth the power of his anger? *Even according to thy fear so is thy wrath.*" In many cases the *evil* is far less than the *fear*; and when the reality comes it is found to be nothing compared with the apprehension. But *here* the reality will equal, the reality will *surpass*, all imagination. When one drop of this wrath has fallen upon a man, judicially from God, he has been driven into despair; his soul has "preferred strangling, and death rather than life." And even when a little of it has been felt by the Christian himself, under conviction of sin, he has "eaten ashes like bread;" he has "mingled his drink with weeping;" he has slept, but he has been scared with dreams, and terrified with visions; he has said with David, "When I suffer thy terrors I am distracted;" he has exclaimed with Solomon, "A wounded spirit who can bear?"

Let us, secondly, consider THE REVELATION OF THIS WRATH. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven." It is made known in various ways: it is revealed to our faith; it is revealed to our conscience; it is revealed to our very senses.

It is revealed to our *faith*. And this is done by the Scriptures: faith sees it plainly enough in this book; there hell is naked before it, and destruction has no covering; there faith beholds the outer darkness where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Those who believe this Volume must admit this misery, and those who deny the misery must get rid of the Volume; that is, they must get rid of the truth of it; before they can feel satisfaction they must believe that this book is a cunningly-devised fable. We talk of "the faith of a Christian:" what is his *faith* compared with the greatness of *the sight* of the man who believes that a scheme so harmonious in its parts, so sublime in its discoveries, so wise in its contrivances, so holy in its nature, breathing such pure morality, so benevolent in its tendency, so conducive to the welfare of man, individually and socially considered—a scheme preserved by Providence, established by miracles, in defence of which the best of men have died, and the wisest of men have lived—the faith, I say, of a man who can believe that all this is the offspring of a weak or a wicked mind?

It is also revealed to *the conscience*. Thus it is revealed in those uneasinesses and apprehensions which attend the commission of sin. It is hard, if not impossible, for a sinner to deliver himself from these: and why so? We are generally referred to the apprehension of human detection and human punishment: but what are we to do when we find these apprehensions where no human detection is expected, where no human punishment is reckoned upon?

Whence is it that any unusual appearance or awful occurrence gives to the mind a kind of fearful determination? When Joseph's brethren were in the hold, they said one to another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us." What was there here to remind them of Joseph? O, there was enough. Inhumanity deserves and demands punishment; and conscience *knows* it. And when Belshazzar was at his feast, and saw the fingers inscribing some characters on the ceiling, his face gathered terror, the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. Why? Since he does not understand the writing, how does he know but that it is an eulogium upon his character—but that it is an announcement of the raising of the siege by Cyrus—or that it is a prediction of the extension of his reign? There was something *within* him that foreboded of evil; and the interpreter, therefore, only came in to confirm the exposition of his own feelings. So was it with Herod. It is commonly supposed that Herod was a Sadducee; and, if so, he denied the existence of spirits, and the resurrection of the dead: and yet, when he heard of the fame of Jesus, he said, "It is John the Baptist, he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works are done by him." His conscience was too strong for his creed.

It is revealed even to our *senses*. This is conclusive, by our being able to appeal to facts. All nature abounds throughout with tokens of God's displeasure against sin. Proofs of the Deluge, for instance, are everywhere to be found. What diseases, what famines, what hurricanes, what earthquakes sometimes desolate our earth! What sufferings of every kind have been inflicted upon individuals, upon families, upon nations! Surely these could not have been looked for in the ordinary course of things, under the government of a holy, and benevolent, and kind Being, whose mercies are said to be "over all his works;" neither could it have been the effect of chance; but it is the result of the appointment of Him who has established a connexion between sin and misery. And though the present is not properly considered a state of retribution, (*that* is future,) yet there is obviously such a connexion established already between sin and misery; and though there is a tendency in the one to produce the other, yet in the present state it is checked, it is hindered; because we are in a mixed condition, and God exercises long-suffering towards us, not willing that any should perish: and some are spared for the sake of others; and some are spared to accomplish providential designs. Thus the tendency of sin to produce misery has not its full influence. But yet to any reflective mind, there is enough to be seen to convince that there *is* such a tendency in sin to produce misery; and that, were the obstruction that now hinders the tendency in various particulars to be removed, it would work out and issue in all the dreadful things the Scriptures have made known. Thus the wrath of God is revealed from heaven; revealed to our faith, revealed to our conscience, and revealed to our very senses.

And before we dismiss this part of the subject, we will observe, that, while the existence of this wrath shows us the holiness and justice of God, the revelation of it displays his mercy and his grace too. He would not take you sinners by surprise: he would not strike before he spoke. He has revealed the wrath before. Why? To inflict it? No; but that you may escape it. He has



revealed it in order to make sin terrible, that sin may produce flight, and that flight may induce you to enter the refuge of hope that is set before you in the Gospel.

Let us, thirdly, contemplate **THE OBJECTS AGAINST WHICH THIS WRATH IS REVEALED.** It is against "all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

It is against *ungodliness*. Ungodliness comprehends all the sins against the first table of the law. Ungodliness consists in a disregard of God: the ungodly do not fear him; the ungodly do not love him; the ungodly do not worship him; the ungodly do not confide in him. God is not in all their thoughts: they practically say unto him, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

If any of you think you may be very godly characters, notwithstanding all this, provided that you are moral, you are under a most dreadful mistake. Be assured, religion is nothing without godliness. What is the duty—what *can* be the duty you owe to any or all of your fellow creatures compared with that which you owe to Him who is your Maker, your Preserver, your Benefactor, your Governor, your Saviour? The servant that regards every one but his master—the child that is dutiful to every one but his father—the wife that is faithful to every one but her husband—these would be very inadequate images to hold forth the condition of the man who professes to pay a proper regard to other beings, while he lives without God and without hope in the world.

On the other hand, though righteousness is nothing without godliness, godliness is nothing without righteousness. Though there may be morality without religion, there cannot be religion without morality. We are therefore reminded that this wrath is revealed against *unrighteousness*. Unrighteousness comprehends all the sins against the second table of the law. Unrighteousness is injustice in your regards and in your dealings with your fellow creatures. "What," you say, "not paying them when they labour for us, and in not paying when we purchase from them?" Yes, nothing *less* than this. "Let no man," says the Apostle, "go beyond and defraud his brother." But this does not go far enough. You may be unrighteous, and yet keep within the bounds of the law and civil decency, when yet you are unrighteous in other respects and instances; unrighteousness if you render not to all their due, fear to whom fear, tribute to whom tribute; unrighteous if you do not afford relief to those who are in distress, when you have it in your power to do it. "Withhold not," says Solomon, "good from them to whom it is due." Observe, they have claims upon you; and says the Apostle John, "Whosoever hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassions from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" It is impossible, if we regard the commands of God, and the design of Providence, and the claims of our common nature upon us.

And this is not all: it is revealed against *all* ungodliness, and *all* unrighteousness—the concealed and the open, the refined and the gross. You are for ever laying down rules which God does not sanction, and distinguishing between things which have no difference in his sight. You do not worship a graven image, but then you take the name of your God in vain: did not he who gave

the second commandment give also the third? You do not swear; O no, you tremble at the thought: but then you profane God's holy day. "O no," you say; "we should deem it very sinful indeed to employ a carpenter or a mason:" but you employ others. You would not for the world steal—not you: but you can surround the tea-table with a number of gospel-gossips, and bear false witness against your neighbour by the hour. You would not murder; but you covet: and is not this equally forbidden? What pickings and choosings are here! And do you imagine that God has left matters to your option in such a case as this? No; you are to regard all these without partiality.

There are three passages of Scripture which you would do well when you go home to reflect upon. One is the language of the Apostle John, when he says "All unrighteousness is sin." Mind that. Another is the language of James when he says, "He that saith, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." And the other is the language of David in Psalm cxix. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments."

We were, fourthly, to remark, **THE CLASS OF VICTIMS PECULIARLY OB NOXIOUS TO IT.** For, says the Apostle, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." What men. "Who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Not that this is added by way of exclusion, as if these only would be punished; but in the way of enhancement and aggravation. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all* the ungodly, and *all* the unrighteous, but more intensely burns (this is the meaning of the Apostle) against those who act against their knowledge, having a convinced judgment, but being wedded to a wicked life.

Now let us enter into this: for, my brethren, there is far more of this to be found than is commonly imagined. The heathen themselves never lived up to the light they possessed, never practised what they knew. This is the charge directly brought home against them by the Apostle in this chapter: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and to creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness." It was not otherwise also with the Jews: *they* never practised what they knew. This is the charge the Apostle brings against them in the next chapter: "Behold thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that teachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?"



Are we to go on? There is not a man in any country under heaven, or pertaining to any religious sect, that lives up to his own principles: he does many things which he knows to be wrong, and he omits many things which he knows to be right. The plea of ignorance therefore can only be admitted in the case of idiots, and no others: all the rest are of those, as Job says, who “rebel against the light,” (and you will observe that this knowledge is attainable—ignorance is criminal,) not only rebelling against that which they *might* know, but against that which they *do* know. The original is—and so it is strongly rendered, “who *imprison* the truth in unrighteousness:” that is, the truth would speak in them, and struggles to be heard; but it is confined, imprisoned. Fashion, the god of this world, the love of fame, the love of money, the love of pleasure, these are the jail wardens; these are the jailers; these confine the truth in prison. Saul knew it belonged not to him to offer sacrifice; his conscience told him, therefore, that it was a sin: he struggled hard but yielded. “I forced myself”—(mark the expression: there was difficulty in the case before he could succeed. Sinner, you understand such a force as this.) “I forced myself, therefore, and offered a burnt-offering.” Herod knew John; he revered him; he considered him a just man; he knew that the murder of him would be the most unjust thing; his conscience told him so; and he was very sorry when the desire of Herodias was expressed: but he overcame it, though he struggled hard: “For the oath’s sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.” Thus a regard for his own word overpowered the word of God. It was the same with Pilate: Pilate was persuaded of our Saviour’s innocence, and the persuasion was increased by the dream which his wife had in the morning; and when she informed him of it he found a struggle within him; but he forced himself, and condemned Him whom he knew to be innocent. And thus it is now with—O how many in the presence of God! They know such and such things to be sins, and yet they practise them; they know such and such things to be duties, and yet they neglect them: they are convinced, but not converted; they are wise, but not wise unto salvation.

What then, in the first place, shall we say to the state of many—what shall we say of the state of those of *you* (for I do not preach concerning others, but address those immediately before me)—what are we to think of the state of those born in a land of light, who have attended at the family altar, and who have from children known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation? With what accusing and condemning consciences you have forced yourselves on, you and God only know. You have often, perhaps, wished that you knew less. “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” Suppose a man had two servants, and one of them ran against him in a dark passage, and the other came in the light and struck him in the face; would he regard these alike? O no, says our Saviour—“The servant who knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”

I have read of a captain who, when he found his men begin to waver, threw himself on the ground, and exclaimed, "Well, if you will flee, you shall tread me under foot." Conscience has done the very same with regard to some of you: conscience has addressed you; conscience has said, "I will be trampled upon before you shall proceed;" and trampled upon it you have. Yea, Christ himself has done this; he has thrown himself down for you to trample upon. What otherwise can be the meaning of that language—"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath *trodden under foot the Son of God*, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, where-with he was sanctified, an unworthy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for such.

Therefore, secondly, let me beseech you *to practise what you know*. O how much depends upon this! To what purpose should God afford you more light than you have, when you neglect the light you already possess? It is kind in God to withhold it; it is merciful in God to withhold it. While you retain your present indisposition to use and improve it, God, by giving you more, would only be adding to your sins, and increasing your condemnation. O let truth no longer be imprisoned in your bosoms: let conscience go free. Do you believe that covetousness is a sin? I know that you do. Let the conviction go free; let it influence you, and be ready to distribute, and willing to communicate. Do you believe that it is your duty to perform family worship? I know that you do. Then let conscience go free. Give scope to the conviction, and immediately establish the worship of God in your family: let not fear or shame restrain you; and say with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." If you believe it your duty to make a profession of religion, and to join the Church of God (and I know you believe it), why, then, go immediately and give up yourselves, not only "to the Lord," but "to his people," and be concerned to walk in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless. Then you will live peaceably; you will have peace *within*, which is much better than peace *without*: whereas now your convictions and your dispositions are perpetually fighting; you are all confusion and distraction within; you are condemned already, and hell is begun within you. If you should escape for the present, conviction and uneasiness may very easily be produced, as you pass on through life: and should you hide your cares under the delusion, should you have no bands in your death, and your strength be firm, and should you fall asleep like a beast, it will only be to awaken in the midst of lamentation and woe.

Finally, *is there nothing else revealed from heaven but the wrath of God?* We deserve nothing else; but is there no way of escape from it? O, we have a revelation of *mercy* and of *grace* too. O, we are informed that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." We are told that Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come. We are informed of a free, full, and everlasting salvation. O that you were wise! O that you made the disposition of the Apostle your own, in this case; and, instead of following lying vanities, and forsaking your own mercies, you could be prevailed on immediately to say, "That I may win Christ, and be found in him"—as Noah was in the ark, and as the man-slayer was in the City of Refuge! Then there would be no con-

demnation to which you would be exposed. Then, "being justified by his blood," you would be "saved from wrath to come:" not from *affliction*, but *wrath*; not from *death*, but *wrath*; from wrath—wrath in affliction, wrath in death. You would be completely and for ever saved: and you know (for this is the grand decision of the Faithful and True Witness) "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son of God shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

## DAVID'S EXPERIENCE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CHRISTIAN'S.

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REV. J. SANDFORD, A.M.

LONG ACRE EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, DECEMBER 21, 1834.

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“ And Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him. And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually. Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.”—1 SAMUEL, xviii. 28—30.

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IN God's dealings with David, we behold a lively and instructive picture of his procedure with the Church and with individuals. We see also the benefit to be derived from David's history, if we do not always recognize in him, not merely a type of the blessed Redeemer, but also a portrait of the disciple, and the diversified experience by which he is disciplined for the coming glory. And I should not have invited your attention to this portion of inspired truth, had I not hoped that it might be made subservient to your spiritual improvement, by furnishing the Christian with comfort and instruction suitable to his individual case. Might I solicit you again to bear me in my ministrations on your hearts before God; and pray that wisdom may be given to me to extract from this and every other subject, the divine food which may refresh you and do you good.

Now we have seen David in circumstances of obscurity and seclusion, and afterwards introduced into the meridian of a court, and honoured by the applauses of admiring thousands. We have seen him return from the glory, and the pomp, and the fashion of the palace, to his father's humble roof, and to his lowly avocation. Then we have noticed him when he has left his home for the public stage, and, by one loyal and courageous enterprise, is lifted above the possibility of future oblivion. Yesterday he was an obscure shepherd, whose presence on the field of battle was resented as presumptuous; to-day he is the triumphant conqueror of Goliath, placed over all the men of war, and celebrated by the songs and the dances of the daughters of Israel. Still it was the same spirit of faith in God, which distinguished him in these different positions, and preserved him in his rapid elevation to greatness. It was because God was with him that he was qualified for the duties, and secured from the temptations through which he passed: so that he knew how either to abound or to be abased; and was carried victorious through his conflict with the giant, as he had been with the lion and the bear; and kept as sincere and as without offence amidst the enticements of the court as he had been in the less seductive scenes of Bethlehem. And we shall find, that the same gracious eye continued to watch over him; that the Lord did not forsake for a moment the work of his own hand; but

that he still ordered the events of David's life for the furtherance of his gracious purposes towards him.

Now henceforward David was a personage of notoriety and distinction; he goes out and he comes in before the people. A return to privacy is for ever denied him, and the anxieties and the responsibilities of a public man devolve upon him till the day of his death. The consequences of his triumph over the Philistine champion, and the eager haste of Jonathan to array him in a dress more suitable to his acquired fame, is emblematical of his altered circumstances. His shepherd's dress and his shepherd's employment are laid aside for others; he puts away the sling and the stone, and he walks forth from the tent of Saul a caparisoned warrior, in the habiliments of his sworn brother Jonathan, even to the sword, and the bow, and the girdle. Poor David; we are disposed to pity you: for you shall never know again the light-hearted and buoyant gladness of your younger days. When you doffed your shepherd's dress, you abandoned the safeguard of your peace: the dignities of office must be purchased with the usual sacrifices; and you will never tread with so light a step amidst the labyrinths of the court, as you once did upon the free sod of your native hills; or sleep so softly upon the carved bed of state, as on the rustic pallet of your father's cot, or beneath the canopy of the starry sky. You could then commit yourself to rest, secure, though the door was unlatched, or when the wild beasts prowled around your bed: but now the eye of love must keep sentinel to save you from the assassin's knife.

We shall say a word upon David's success, upon David's trial, upon David's good conduct, and David's consolation. And we shall find that in all these particulars David's history is characteristic of the ordinary experience of the Christian.

Now we have seen David's signal victory over the gigantic enemy, whom he encountered in the strength of God, and in simple reliance upon the divine aid. And we can conceive the gratulations that were poured upon him as he went to Jerusalem, bearing the gory head of the Philistine as a trophy of his victory, and depositing, in the house of the Lord, the sword of his antagonist, as a memorial of his gratitude. It was a proud day when David received the thanks of the king, and of all the captains of his armed hosts; and when the women came to greet him with singing and dancing; and when Jonathan, the king's son, welcomed him as a brother; and when the soft looks of Michal, Saul's daughter, told him she loved him. His young heart must have beat tumultuously when he felt himself the admiration of every eye, and heard his name rend the sky in the shouts of the applauding multitude, and the songs of the women that came to meet him "with tabrets, and with joy, and with instruments of music." But O, my brethren, it was a more perilous moment that for David, than when his colossal antagonist came towards him, and he had nothing but his rustic dress to guard his breast from the sword and the spear; for he had often fought with the arm of flesh, but now he had to wrestle with an enemy that must have begun to stir in his own bosom. Doubtless he had some vain-glorious thoughts, and there would be a temptation to lean on his own strength, and to give the glory less exclusively to God. When he found himself caressed by the great, and applauded by the people, and though an inexperienced soldier,



lifted at once to a high military command, there would be a peculiar danger, lest his heart being lifted up within him in the sunshine of popularity, he should forget the lessons he had learnt in obscurity. His successes had been so signal, that there was great need of affliction: and we shall see that God furnished these, and took care that there should be trials to sift David, lest he should be exalted above measure.

But to apply this portion of David's experience to the Christian. How often, my brethren, has the Lord suffered the young disciple to achieve spiritual exploits which have surprised himself and others. His enemies vanish before him; his strength and his zeal are the admiration of all, and he is ready to assume to himself every task which would seem to dismay a less trustful and sanguine spirit. He mounts upon eagle's wings; he runs, and is not weary; he is looked upon as a prodigy of religious attainment. Now at such a moment he is apt to make small allowances for the infirmities of others; and is apt to imagine, he alone is left to support God's truth, and to fight his battle. He is very sedulous in his religious duties, and he reaps the corresponding fruitfulness. He waits on God, and he renews his youthful strength; and if it were not for coming trials and coming mortifications, he would esteem himself a giant in the ways of God. Alas! "he mistakes," as it has been finely said, "the virgin honey for his daily food."

Now it might have been so with the stripling David; and therefore God, in mercy, seasons his cup with adversity, and so appoints, that the commencement of his grace was the beginning also of his trouble. No sooner is David hailed with the acclamations of his countrymen, than Saul turned to be his deadly enemy. His popularity brings with it the jealousy and the enmity of him who is monarch in Israel. "And the women," it is said, "answered one another as they played, and said, Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day forward." The proofs of his enmity soon appeared; and on the next day after this diabolical passion had taken possession of the monarch's breast, as David, unspoiled by his elevation, and still anxious to confer pleasure, "played with his hand as at other times, Saul cast his javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice."

Now what a contrast we have here, my brethren, between him with whom the Lord was, and him from whom the Lord was departed! The one is in the exercise of social charity, seeking to minister relief and solace, and blending song and hand in the praise of God; the other actuated by a murderous hate, and aiming at the life of the benefactor, whose only fault was his increasing favour with God and man. Still God seems to have possessed David with that majesty of manner which awed the jealous monarch: just as the eye of man has been known to fascinate and tame the maniac or the wild beast: and though Saul hated the son of Jesse, yet he also feared him. The sight of him at last became a torment, and he removed him from him, and made him a captain over a thousand; probably assigning him some post where he would be exposed to



continual skirmishing with the enemy. But Saul's malice only augments David's popularity, since it brought him more into contact with his countrymen, as he went in and out before them in his command. "And David," it is said, "behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him. Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, and he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them." Therefore Saul endeavoured, by interesting David's affection in behalf of his daughter, and promising to give her hand as a reward for victories over the Philistines, to excite David to some feat of daring which might cost him his life. Again, when the time came that she should have been given to him and she was given to another, he sought to provoke him to some attempt that might be construed into rebellion. When this failed, he offered his younger daughter to David, on condition that he slew one hundred of the Philistines; for he "thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines." But David having more than accomplished his engagement, and presented the foreskins of two hundred of their enemies whom he had slain in battle, the king was compelled to stand by his compact, and Michal became David's wife.

Thus we see, my brethren, that David's elevation brought with it a host of troubles; that his life was attempted; that he was placed in trying circumstances; that he was exposed to the weapons of the Philistines; and, on one occasion, to the treachery of false friends: yet that God suffered his servant to be thus afflicted; he brought him through his trials, and overruled these for his good. He fitted him to reign by teaching him to serve: he refined his spirit, and kept it low, like the weaned child: he kept under the mischief that might be in David's heart by the pressure of outward anxieties; he does it by withholding that unmixed prosperity which is never good to human interest: he taught him to cease from created things, and to seek his shelter and delight in God. Had there been no obstruction to David's happiness; had all things smiled on him; and, in addition to the favour of his countrymen and the friendship of Jonathan, and the love of Michal, had he enjoyed the countenance and favour of the king, where would have been the exercise of faith? and how many and overwhelming would have been the temptations to which his virtue would have been exposed! And therefore it was in love that the Lord suffered him to be harassed and disappointed, and taught him that this was not his rest, for it was polluted.

Now, my beloved brethren, it is thus that God deals with all his children, to whom it is his good pleasure eventually to give the kingdom. No sooner do they become his beloved ones by covenant, than the yoke of the oppressor is broken upon their shoulders: then God begins that preparatory process, which is to school them for their future inheritance. He keeps them in the chartered way of obedience by hedging up their path on either side. He designs further, by suffering them to encounter difficulties, to exhibit their own weakness, and teach them to lean on strength not their own. He suffers trouble to arise, that they may be driven into closer communion with himself. He causes them at once to prove his faithfulness, and to learn obedience by what they suffered.

Now it is appointed, my brethren, that through much tribulation we should all enter the kingdom of God; that the road to heaven should be rough; that we should find this world a wilderness. Believe it, my beloved, all the saints of

God have found it so. Not one of that radiant throng that stand before the throne of God in light, with palms in their hands, praising God, but have been refined by affliction; for "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." The appointment is not an arbitrary one; but it is designed in tender love. The Christian will find no heaven in this wilderness world; nor shall he ever be suffered to set up his tents as one that is at ease in Zion on this side eternity.

Perhaps there are some persons here before me, who consider their own cases peculiar; who are in affliction, and who say, "Surely none was ever so distressed as I am;" and who, when they compare their apparent griefs with the apparent lot of others, are almost tempted to murmur at the contrast. My beloved, if such persons could examine the secrets of another's breast, if they knew their neighbour's griefs and anxieties as well as their own, they might find that the balance is in their own favour; that there is a grief as well as a joy in the breast of every sincere child of God, with which a stranger doth not intermeddle. But they whom God loves will be made to feel themselves, and to confess themselves pilgrims here, that they may desire a better country, that is a heavenly. But even without this insight into the general appointment, which provides that thorns and thistles should spring up in our road, the child of God may surely recognize in his own case the benefit he derives from trials and afflictions, and will admit, that without these, his evil passions would have gained ground, and his graces never would have been ripened.

But to consider, shortly, David's conduct. If he had borne himself dutifully and meekly at home, and bravely in the field of battle, he demeaned himself with equal excellence in the distinguished duties to which he had been so suddenly called: no impropriety of speech or conduct betrayed allusion to his recently acquired honours; unlike a novice, he was not lifted up with pride, so as to fall into the condemnation of the devil. It was a proof of God's grace in David's heart, that he was able to bear all the honours that flowed in upon him of a sudden, without being lifted up above measure. "They that fly so fast," observes Matthew Henry, "had need of good heads and good hearts. It is harder to know how to abound, than how to be abased." But "David," it is said, "went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely; and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants." A striking proof this of David's blameless and honest conduct, that he delighted not only those whom he commanded, and the people in general, but even had a good word from the royal courtiers, who were, of all others, most likely to have envied his success, and therefore to have spoken disparagingly of him. And then, again, we read that he was removed by Saul's jealousy to another station; "but David behaved himself wisely, and all Israel and Judah loved David." Why? Because the Lord was with him, and his profiting appeared unto all men. Had David been abandoned to himself, or had he quenched the Spirit by a careless and disobedient walk, he had been like Saul, of whom we read that at first he shunned the royal dignity, and concealed himself to avoid it; but afterwards he was so carnalized and corrupted by royalty, that he was willing to secure its continuance at the price of all imaginable sacrifices. But of David's holy and consistent

walk with God, we are abundantly assured; and we may discover it in every variety of his circumspect and decorous conduct. We see in David no impatience under disappointment, no fretfulness under unjust treatment, no disrespectful carriage towards his king, even when he was an aggrieved and persecuted man. By his victory over Goliath he had, according to the tenor of the royal promise, won the king's daughter for his bride, and might have claimed her hand as his rightful reward. But when Saul drew back from his engagement, David said nothing, and when the promise was repeated with a view to seduce him into danger, we admire the modest dignity of his reply: "And David said unto Saul, Who am I? and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?" Nay, when he was again betrothed to his affianced bride, and the grossest indignity was put upon him in the eyes of all the court, and all the people; yet David refrained himself, and repressed the feeling that must have been stirring in his bosom, he committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously: he knew who had said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." He spoke no evil of dignities. He had once smitten the Goliath who had defied the armies of the living God; but he hid his own wrongs in the recesses of his own bosom. He was a pattern of humility and meekness, like our divine Master, of whom he was the type: and his example may furnish us with an instructive lesson in any circumstances of injustice that may be done us, or of slight that may be put upon us. David was neither servile in adversity, nor audacious in prosperity, nor disposed to stand upon his personal rights, as if a privilege was never to be abandoned for the sake of peace. His charity was of that divine character that "suffereth long, and is kind;" that "envieth not;" that "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil." He trusted in God, my brethren, and he had his reward: he was meek, and it was given to him to inherit the earth. May we all learn to admire and to imitate David's conduct in this respect, that we may be approved of by David's Lord. And when we are tempted to return injustice, and to retaliate wrongs, may we remember there is more dignity in patient endurance, than in angry resentment; that "better is he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." "But if when we do well and suffer for it, we take it patiently, this is acceptable unto God; for even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

But I proceed to notice, in conclusion, David's consolations. They were divinely appointed, my brethren, to counteract the disquietude and trials which had occurred to him upon his elevation.

In the first place, *God was with David*. Now this fact is thrice repeated in the chapter from which I have read. The God who had been David's portion and his song in the tents of Bethlehem, who had delivered him from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, and from Goliath's sword and spear, continued to direct and to support him in the moments of his official dignity; and in the assurance of the divine favour, and the full communion with God,

David found a support and solace in every trial. What though Saul hated him, and became his enemy continually, and sought to kill him; yet God was "the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever." He knew that he had a mighty enemy; but the Lord was mightier still: and the consciousness of the eye that watched over him, and the hand that guarded him, whispered to him sweet peace. The very extremes to which he was at times reduced, and the narrowness of his steps, served to establish David's confidence in his God. He could say, "By this I know that thou favourest me, because my enemy doth not triumph over me." And even though his heart was cast down and overwhelmed, he could argue with himself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

My beloved, are we exposed to animosity and persecution at any time, by reason of our allegiance to heaven? And do we fear that the spiritual enemy is as a ramping and a roaring lion, continually seeking to devour us? Let us look upon the parallel case of David; and if our trials resemble his, O so indeed may our consolations. If Saul was David's enemy, yet the Lord was his friend; and though bad men and devils may be arrayed in opposition, yet if David's "God be for us, who can be against us?" If "the Lord is our light and our shield, whom shall we fear?" If "the Lord is our strength, of whom shall we be afraid?"

But observe; *David was blessed moreover with human sympathy and support* - and the very same place which held his deadliest enemy, furnished him with a matchless friend. Language contains no such exquisite episode as the mutual love of Jonathan and David; and we may search in vain through all the legends of history, and all the fictions of poetry, for a friendship so pure and disinterested as knit the soul of Jonathan to the son of Jesse. "Saul and Jonathan were lovely, and very pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love was wonderful; passing the love of women." Who does not love to admire and weep for Jonathan? David won the throne of Israel; it was a greater glory to Jonathan to be willing to resign it. We yield our homage to the youthful victor, as he stands, flushed with conquest, in the presence of the king; but it is a higher sentiment which draws our hearts to him who, at such a moment, forgot himself in his admiration of another, and who sees only an argument for love and friendship in the deed that eclipsed his humbler fame, and interposed a mighty barrier between him and his hereditary rights. If history furnishes but one David, it affords also but one Jonathan. Such a character as his almost redeems our species. And we are called to admire the divine consideration which provided David with such a friend, who more than counterbalanced the enmity of the father by the affection of the son. But, then, while you admire this picture of human friendship, you are not to forget the lesson that it conveys to ourselves. If David, my brethren, was a type of Christ Jesus, so too was Jonathan. And when we read of him divesting himself of the robe, and giving it to David; and these two making a covenant together, we cannot surely overlook that greater love, which not only dresses the believer in the dress of his Lord, but also clothed Immanuel with the weeds of our poor, degraded, suffering humanity. And we shall confess, if we are in



covenant to-day with the Saviour, that his love is a sufficient defence against every foe, and a sufficient consolation in every distress.

We have only to notice further *the favour which David secured with Saul's servants, and with all Israel and Judah.* The amiability and integrity of his conduct won him golden opinions every where: and even those who might have envied him his successes, and hated him for his favour, were constrained to admire his sterling principle. My brethren, it is a blessed thing when we can exhibit the beauty of holiness, and when our religion is recommended and endeared by our virtue; when we are gentle as well as faithful, and fascinating as well as good; when all men are constrained to confess, that, if our creed appears enthusiastic, yet at least it produces very precious fruits. Practical Christianity will produce us enemies in a bad world: but, my brethren, it will also secure us many friends among the impartial and the good. It may be the means at last of overcoming the hostility which it at first excites. We are to expect enmity; but O let us not provoke it. If our standard of doctrine and of practice separates us from the many, let us see to it that it lifts us far above them; that it affords a pattern as well as a proof: and by making us better subjects and better citizens—better, in short, in every public, and private, and social relation—leave our adversaries without excuse, and convict where it does not convert. We read of David, that “all Israel and Judah loved him,” and that his “name was much set by;” and we read of Jesus, “that he grew in favour with God and man:” and though we know that the former had afterwards many enemies, and that the latter was “despised and rejected of men,” yet if we are followers of either, we shall endeavour to imitate the graces which procured them respect, as well as those which inflamed opposition and indignity. In a word, my beloved, we shall strive to give a faithful portrait of the religion of Christ, and then we must leave the rest, as far as others are concerned, in the hands of our God. May he bless his own word!

## THE BLESSEDNESS OF SANCTIFIED SORROW

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REV. T. RAFFLES, LL.D.

GREAT GEORGE'S STREET CHAPEL, LIVERPOOL, OCTOBER 19, 1834.

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"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."—MATTHEW, v. 4.

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"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting." Apparently a very rash and inconsiderate speech! a perfect paradox; a contradiction almost in terms. And yet it was the declaration of the wisest man that ever lived, intimately and accurately acquainted with all the states and conditions of human society, and who knew more than almost any other who has left his experience on record for our instruction, what the house of mourning meant. Nor can this be exhibited as the judgment of one who was not intimately acquainted with the "house of feasting;" who had not tasted of these things. He drank deep of the intoxicating bowl of this world's pleasure; he tried every scene of amusement, and every source of pleasure it contained; but he found them all cisterns, broken and dried: and when he calmly reviewed, and impartially estimated the whole case, he was compelled to pronounce, "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity."

But, beloved, a greater than Solomon is here; and his testimony is substantially the same: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." This was a novel sentiment to those by whom the declaration was in the first instance heard; it was another of those "hard sayings," which they found it very difficult to hear: nor has the same sentiment lost any of its unpalatableness, notwithstanding the ages that have elapsed between the period of its first announcement and the present day.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." What a strange declaration! What, is there blessedness in grief? Is there blessedness in sorrow? Is there blessedness in disappointment? Is there blessedness in pain? O, yes; it is even so, when these are sanctified, and when they have that salutary influence upon the heart, which it is the gracious and benevolent design of our Heavenly Father they should exert and secure. Then they are blessed indeed: there is a rose of celestial fragrance concealed amongst the thorns; there is a note of incomparable sweetness arising from the bitter cry; and beneath the deep disguise a blessing inestimable, infinite, and eternal, is contained. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Two things it behoves us to do, in order to elucidate and explain this passage. First, we must ascertain what that mourning is which Christ thus pronounces blessed. And in the second place, we must ascertain what that blessedness is which he declares to be inseparably connected with that mourning. "Blessed

are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Will you give us your patient attention to these things.

First, let us ascertain **WHAT THAT MOURNING IS WHICH CHRIST THUS PRONOUNCES BLESSED.** Is it any kind of mourning? Is it every kind of mourning? Assuredly not. There is a mourning that is highly criminal; there is a grief that is inseparably connected with a curse; there is a sorrow of the world that worketh death.

*Such is the mourning that springs from a bad source.* Some men mourn because their pride is wounded; something has occurred to lower their consequence, and degrade their dignity in the sight of their fellow-men; and they are stung to the heart with vexation, mortification, and chagrin; and they think that they do well to be angry, and that they do well to sorrow and grieve, even unto death. There are some who mourn from envy. They see others placed in what they esteem happier circumstances than themselves; richer, wealthier, more prosperous, more successful, more honoured than they are: and they mourn in sullen discontent over what they account the hardness of their lot. Thus the Psalmist, in an evil hour, tells us, that he was envious at the prosperity of the wicked. And to such a pitch did he suffer the unhallowed feeling to prevail in his mind, that he acknowledges he was so foolish, he was even as a beast before God, until he went into the sanctuary of God, anticipated the future, and saw their end; then he saw the folly of his unhallowed feelings of envious discontent.

Again, *such is the mourning that is the expression of a bad spirit.* When grief is the expression of wrathfulness, peevishness, and discontent, then it is sinful. Such was the mourning of the prophet Jonah, because of his gourd. Such is often the nature of the sorrow in which we indulge, who have set our hearts upon some beloved object, upon some creature comforts, upon some desirable possession, and it has pleased God to remove it from us. Our gourd has withered; the beloved relative sickens and dies; the object of our idolatrous attachment is taken away, and we are overwhelmed with grief; we hang down our heads like bull-rushes; tears are our meat day and night. But we sorrow not because there was a necessity for this painful dispensation: we sorrow not because our heart has set its affections so inordinately upon this beloved one, that it was essential for our chastisement and our salvation that it should be taken away from us. We mourn and we grieve because of the gratification of which we are thus deprived, and because of the sense of anguish we are thus called to endure. It is discontent at the dispensation, not sorrow at its cause, that has filled the heart with sadness, and suffused the eyes with tears. And indeed we may sum up all in one declaration—all the sorrow, of every kind, all the mourning, that is not sanctified, is sin. It is unhallowed in its sources; it is sinful in its principles; it is injurious in its tendency. It is sorrow of the world; it is not godly sorrow; it worketh death, and there is no blessing connected with it.

But what is that mourning which our Lord pronounces blessed? It is the mourning of the genuine penitent; it is the mourning of the true believer; whose sorrow is sanctified, springing from sources which God approves, regulated and controlled by principles which his Word supplies, tending to the

advancement of his glory, and the present and eternal welfare of those who are its subjects. Blessed are they who thus mourn, for they shall be comforted. But let us specify particulars, that we may understand the nature of this sorrow aright.

In the first place, *blessed are they who thus mourn for themselves.* We have no opinion of that man's religion which has to do with every one but himself; who laments over everybody's failings but his own; who can discover the beam which is in his neighbour's eye, but cannot perceive the mote which is in his own eye. True it is, that the real Christian must sigh and cry over national sins; the abominations that are done in the land. When he beholds transgressors, in whatever walk or state of society he discovers them, he must be grieved. But no sorrow for the sins of others can be after a godly sort, unless we have first been sorry for our own sins. Here the sorrow of the mourner must begin, whose mourning is entitled to the blessing spoken of in the text. There must be a mourning for sin; original and contracted sin; personal and national sin. There must be the mourning of genuine repentance; a true contrition; the anguish of the broken and contrite heart. O how deep, how agonizing must it be, when the sorrow of the parent, bereaved of his first-born, his only child, is presented as an illustration of it! "They shall behold Him whom they have pierced, and mourn, and shall be in bitterness as one is in bitterness for his first-born, and mourn for him as one that mourneth for his only child." The true penitent, in the day when he is first convinced of sin, and perceives its malignant nature, its dreadful aggravation in the sight of the divine love, in the sight of divine purity and justice, feels as though there were no other in the universe, save himself, unfallen; he feels as though the sins of all other men were nothing and vanity, compared with his sin; the load of his guilt presses upon him as a burden too heavy to be borne; he acknowledges himself to be the chief of sinners; and in the anguish of his spirit thus calls upon God: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." From various sources the sorrow of the true penitent springs; and from various considerations his grief on account of sin is deepened and augmented. He sees sin in its native odiousness; as the abominable thing which the soul of God hates. He sees sin as the cause of all the degradation, and suffering, and agony, and death, which the Redeemer condescended to endure. He sees sin as that which, if it be not removed in its presence, in its pollution, will for ever separate him from God, and shut him up at length in hell. O what an odious, loathsome, detestable thing is sin now; the sin in which he was once delighting; the sin which he once rolled as a sweet morsel beneath his tongue! His besetting sin—that which was dear to him as his right eye, or his right hand—he cuts it off, and casts it from him; while with a broken heart he exclaims, loathing himself, bemoaning his sad condition—"I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou Eternal! Behold I am vile; I loathe myself, and repent in dust and ashes. God be merciful to me a sinner."

But let it not be imagined, that this mourning for sin is confined to the period of the sinner's first conviction, and that the joy of pardon is succeeded by no future sorrow. No, he can never cease to mourn, even to the end of life, for the remembrance of the time past. He can never cease to weep when he is made to possess, even in mature age, the sins of his youth; when he thinks upon those days of rebellion, of folly, and of crime. While there is, throughout the whole



of his mortal pilgrimage, remains of sin in the breast of the holiest and most devoted man, with which he must still engage, and maintain a perpetual struggle—over this he must continually mourn. Take the change in the case of Peter, in the case of Paul, as an example and illustration of this. O what unhallowed passions, O how many omissions; what idle words, what vain thoughts, what innumerable cases of positive and obvious sin in the heart and in the life, in the daily intercourse and conduct, of the most devoted of mankind! What a law in the members, continually warring against the law of the mind; and often bringing a Christian to loathe himself on account of them, bringing him into captivity to the law of sin. It is for this that he struggles, and agonizes, and pants for deliverance, and cries, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

Then what cause has he to mourn over his unfaithfulness, his inconstancy, his sluggishness to all that is good, his reluctance oft-times to believe! His backwardness to speak for God; his attachment to the creature; his want of spirituality; the cleaving of his spirit to the dust—these are the sources of sorrow ever appointed to the man of God. And often they render the record of his experience, like the roll of the prophet, which was written within and without, with weeping, and lamentation, and woe. But blessed are they who mourn thus, and whose sorrow has such a source; “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

In the second place, *blessed are they who mourn for their Christian brethren.* They who mourn with the sorrow and sympathy of brotherly affection and Christian love. “A new commandment,” says Christ, “I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, so do ye also love one another.” And this is one of the most obvious expressions of that love, in the exercise of this sympathy, the sympathy which this love will ever maintain—to bear one another’s burdens, and thus to fulfil this law of Christ. Blessed are they, then, that mourn with their sorrowing brethren, that are afflicted in their afflictions, and weep with them that weep; and whose religion, pure and undefiled before God, is this—to visit the widows and the fatherless in their affliction, and to keep themselves unspotted from the world. But not only are the afflictions of the brethren a source of sorrow to the Christian, but he mourns over their sins, their follies, their failings, their falls. To see a fair profession blasted by some unhappy indiscretion; to see a character, hitherto unsullied, tarnished by some vile sin; to see the cause he is so anxious to promote injured and retarded, by one who ought to have been its most efficient advocate; to see the Redeemer crucified in the very house of his friend; to see him crucified afresh by his own disciples, and held up to the scorn of an infidel and blaspheming world: O, who that loves the Saviour but must mourn for this? Blessed are they who thus mourn, for they shall be comforted.

In the third place, *blessed are they who mourn for the Church;* who lament over the desolations of the Church; of the diminution of her numbers; the desertion of her temples; the neglect of her ordinances; the decline of her graces; the death of her ministers; the attacks of her enemies; the contentions of her members; the treachery of her professed and seeming friends. All these are sources of sorrow to the Christian: in all these things he must take a deep and painful interest. As he never ceases to pray for the peace of Jerusalem,

and only desires the prosperity of such as love her, so he must ever mourn when she is torn by inward contentions, and is impaired and injured in her strength, or tarnished in her glory, or impeded in her triumphs, though it be but a moment, by the attacks of her foes. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning: if I remember not Jerusalem above my chiefest joy, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

Still further, *blessed are they that mourn for the world.* Deeply must the eye of the godly man affect his heart, when he looks abroad and sees the universal prevalence of impiety, irreligion, and crime; the neglect and contempt of God among all ranks and classes of society; the vice and iniquity that abound in the streets of our crowded cities—the great marts of merchandize—and that fills the land in the length and breadth of it, from the palace to the cottage. What ignorance; what recklessness; what impiety; what cursing and swearing; what sabbath-breaking; what acts of injustice; what deeds of enormity; what guilt! O how hideous, how disgusting, how revolting the scene! His spirit is stirred within him with grief as he beholds populous and mighty regions of this fair world wholly given to idolatry. With the Psalmist, as he beholds these things, "rivers of water run down his eyes, because men keep not the law of God." He exclaims with the prophet, "O that mine head were waters, and mine eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night for the sins of the daughter of my people;" for the infatuated multitudes of a Christian land, who are perishing in their sins, and pressing, with a madness that might make angels weep, down the broad road that leadeth to destruction.

We might proceed much further in illustrating the various sources of godly sorrow; of that mourning which the Christian must ever feel, and with which the blessing of the text is inseparably attached. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

But, in the second place, **WHAT IS THE BLESSEDNESS OF THAT COMFORT WHICH THE REDEEMER HERE ASSURES US IS ATTACHED TO THIS MOURNING?**

In the first place, we assert *it is present and positive.* "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." They have the assurance of the pardon of sin. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." It is to such that Jehovah speaks when he says, "Behold I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions." The sacrifices of God, what are they? The riches and costly things, the purchase of this world's silver and gold? No. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Despise it! No; for though he is "the high and the holy One that inhabiteth eternity," yet will he dwell in such a heart; that is the residence of his Spirit.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Herein is the consolation of the saints: they shall be comforted; for their's are the consolations of the Gospel, in all their richness, in all their variety, in all their adaptation, in all their intimacy, in all their exceeding great and precious promises; they are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God. The dispensation of the Gospel and the ministry of mercy are especially to them. "The Spirit

of the Lord God is upon me," said the Redeemer when he opened his commission and commenced his ministry, "because he hath appointed me to preach glad tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken heart,"—to strengthen thy bruised reed, to fan thy smoking flax, and to confirm and establish thee, trembling Christian; to bind up thy broken heart, and pour into it the balm of gladness and joy. "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn:" the day of vengeance is not for them; but the comfort, the consolation, the soothing and sustaining influence of the ministry of reconciliation and peace. They are blessed; for in their sorrow they deeply resemble Christ, and the saints, and the holy and the excellent of all ages of the world, and all dispensations of the Church. What was Jesus? A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. What are these afflictions, these sorrows, these tears? Are you not, brethren, accomplishing thus the same afflictions which were accomplished in your brethren, who in successive generations have gone before you? Like you, it was through much tribulation they entered the kingdom; they knew what sadness and what sorrows meant: their tears were put into the Almighty's bottle. But now they "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" "they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne leads them, and God himself has wiped away all tears from their eyes." Be ye followers of them, then, who through faith and patience thus inherit the promises.

And then, they who thus mourn are blessed; for there is a salutary influence in sanctified affliction. Their sorrow is blessed, because it has an immediate tendency to promote their highest interest and their truest welfare. It softens the heart, and subdues its obduracy; it elevates the soul; it detaches the man from the creature, from sublunary sources and scenes of consolation and joy, and turns him to the only unfailing source. It endears to him the throne of the heavenly grace, and gives him an experience of the sustaining power of the everlasting arm; so that he feels in his own blessed experience the rich enjoyment, that God is a satisfying portion to them that trust in him, and that there is no want to them that look to him for succour. He that goeth forth weeping thus, bears precious seed; and seed that cannot be lost; and seed that must be productive, and yield an ample harvest: "He that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." "Though sorrow may endure for a night," and, like the Psalmist, through the darkness of the night he may "wet his couch with his tears;" but "joy will come in the morning," from the lifting up the light of his heavenly Father's countenance, to chase away his gloom.

Thus we have observed that there is present and positive blessings connected with this mourning. But, secondly, *there are comparative and contrasted blessings connected with this sorrow.* "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." You observe, in the first place, that *the situation of such is less dangerous than that of others.* Who is it that stands in slippery places? Not the mourner who feels the burden of guilt, and laments his worthlessness; who is conscious of his weakness, and is looking to the throne of God for pardon,

for succour, and salvation. Who is it that stands in slippery places? The man whose path is bright, and strewed with flowers; who is rolling in affluence, has all that his heart can wish, and says to his gold, "Thou art my God." The man who is in the midst of scenes of mirth and gaiety, and who is saying, "Rejoice O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and sight of thine eyes"—that is the man that stands in slippery places. But he that is humble and lowly in penitential sorrow and godly grief, he is secure; the everlasting arms are around him; he is, as it were, in the hollow of the Almighty's hand, safe as the apple of his eye.

And then, still further, *the state of such as mourn after this godly sort, is less equivocal than that of others.* When men go on in a course of uninterrupted prosperity and joy, when they are strangers to sorrow and grief, when all is as their heart could wish, there is reason to apprehend that all is not right as it regards their state before God: for it is written, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Now if we endure chastening, then the Lord dealeth with us as his children: "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" "If we be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers," our experience does not correspond with the people of God; we have reason to apprehend then, that all is not right, as it regards us, before him: for if we be without chastisement, "then are we bastards and not sons."

And *their situation is less critical and dangerous, as their state is less equivocal and doubtful.* Sanctified affliction is a sure and certain evidence of our adoption, that we are children. When the Father corrects his children, and sends his chastisements, he sanctifies the discipline.

Then, in the third place, *this blessedness is peculiar to themselves.* "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." There are future consolations in store, of which the present is but the foretaste. For they that mourn thus, shall finally enjoy the blessing of the renewed and sanctified nature, when having laid aside the garments of mortality, they shall enter into the kingdom, prepared for them from before the foundation of the world, and shall be satisfied, waking up in his likeness. They shall be comforted with the fulness of the eternal fruition of the blessed, when the triumph of the Church and the glory of all things shall be complete: when He whom they love shall appear they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is. O let us seek, then, this godly sorrow: let us pronounce those that mourn blessed, whose sorrow springs from such a source, and is sanctified by such an efficacious influence. Amen.

## THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF OUR DAYS.

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REV. T. MORTIMER, B.D.

ST. MARK'S CHURCH, PENTONVILLE, DECEMBER 23, 1834.

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"And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way: and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed."—Acts, xxi. 5.

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YOU may remember, my Christian brethren, that it was with the words of St. Paul we commenced the year: our first Sabbath morning sermon to you in the present year was from this book, the book of the Acts of the Apostles; and from the words of the blessed St. Paul, "Not knowing the things that shall befall me," we considered, by way of accommodation, (a mode of treating Scripture that ought not to be, by any means, general and common among us; but the occasional use of which is not only lawful, but profitable)—we endeavoured to consider the year on which we were then entering as the *terra incognita*, the unknown land. Little could we tell many things that were likely to happen—many things, I would say, that have happened. Now that the year has rolled round, and we are come to the last Sabbath-morning in this year, I am disposed to go, for my last Sunday morning's text, to the same source as I went for my first: and the passage which I have read will furnish us with useful matter of consideration; and may, I conceive, with propriety be accommodated to our present state and circumstances. We have just "accomplished our days;" we are about to take our departure: what can we do better on such an occasion as the present, when we seem looking back on the past year, and looking forward to what may be before us, with trembling uncertainty—what can we do better than they did? "They kneeled down on the shore, and prayed." O, could I bring all my hearers this day, at this juncture, (so to speak,) standing between the two years, with one thousand eight hundred and thirty-four behind, and one thousand eight hundred and thirty-five just before them, (though they are not certain that they will see the commencement of the next year—not sure that they will live to enter upon it)—O, that I could bring every one of my hearers this morning into a spirit of prayer!

The text will suggest to us three topics for consideration and improvement, as well as those I have mentioned: and may the Spirit of God enable us to improve passing circumstances; to seize the present moment while it is ours; for the glory of God, and the salvation of those who are committed to our charge.

The first thing which we may notice is, THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF OUR



DAYS. Paul and his company had purposed only to remain for a little time—the days were now accomplished, and they were about to depart. Brethren, *our* days are numbered; they are numbered often by others; they are, alas! not seldom numbered by ourselves: others can see, oft and again, clear indications of time passing rapidly away, of health declining, of death approaching, when it is to be feared that the parties themselves are often some of the last to suspect it. Now let me just remind you that you have very nearly accomplished another year. This year, like its predecessor, has made some alterations among you. I will not go into detail; I will not dwell upon family bereavements and afflictions: but methinks this season of the year is a solemn memento of the flight of time, and of our mortality. Yes; we look around us, and we can see where death has laid some who, at the beginning of this year, were worshipping God with us here, but now, we trust, are worshipping in another and in a better world.

We, too, ourselves are accomplishing our days. Year after year goes by, and the thoughtless, careless creature again and again takes up the language of compliment at such a season, forgetting the flight of time, forgetting the near approach of eternity. We wish each other “the compliments of the *season*.” I will not quarrel with the phrase, calculated as it is to express a benevolent, an affectionate, a neighbourly, a brotherly feeling: I confess I prefer very much, however, an older English phrase than “the compliments of the season;” I mean, “the blessings of the *season*.” We commemorate at this season of the year the advent of our Lord Christ: on that subject we ought to delight to dwell; and we ought to think how much comes to men in connexion with the gift of Christ; for “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” I say we congratulate one another; but in how many cases is it that, while we look with pleasure and with a measure of thankfulness upon the past, we forget what may be before us?

Now, my Christian brethren, be it known unto you all—not only Christian, but un-Christian—not only saint, but sinner—not only the child of God, but the profligate—be it known you are accomplishing your days. Time is going round; you are being borne forward into that eternal world where we all must soon make our appearance.

And yet some of you have no religion at all: others have got the name, and that is all: some possess the power, and taste the blessedness of it. But, beloved people, over whose souls God has called us to watch now for seven years—how many are there in church this morning who are no more fit to die than they were seven years ago! They have heard the funeral bell, they have seen their neighbours pass to their long homes; they have had memento upon memento, call upon call, warning upon warning: but where are they now? As far from God as ever; as much attached to the present passing scenes, as little concerned about eternity, as if eternity were only connected with the Chinese and the Hindoos, and they themselves had little to do with it. And yet we see time with them passing rapidly away; they are accomplishing their days, but accomplishing their days, alas! without any spiritual improvement. It is a thought which often weighs down our spirit—a thought we have very often expressed before, and, if we live, may often express again—that we fear greatly that some

of you may wish you had never seen this day: that some of you may die without a grain of religion, without any preparation at all for another world the man of business, perhaps, surprised in the midst of his speculations, in the midst of his gains, in the midst of his worldly prospects—seized by paralysis, or by apoplexy, and carried away into an awful eternity, when he had no idea he was near it, when he had no conception that he would be called hence in that way. And if that were the case with some of you, where could you go? To heaven? Would to God it were so! No, my brethren; the man of the world, the unconverted person, however amiable, however respectable, however intelligent, “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” “Ye must be born again.” “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” These are not my words, or you might neglect them: but they are words of one who spake as never man spake; and, God knows, that never man trifled with these words without repenting it.

But further, the text speaks of their **TAKING THEIR DEPARTURE**. We are all about very soon to bid this year farewell. I was going to say we are hearing this day, the last of the fifty-two prophets of the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-four. The first Sabbath in the year came as a messenger from God, bore its testimony, and went its way; the second Sabbath came and bore its testimony also, and went its way: and then some began to fall off, and by and bye others dropped off: and while these fifty-two prophets—if I may be allowed to speak in metaphorical language—were delivering their testimony, some who heard the first, and the second, and the tenth, and the twentieth, have not lived to hear the fifty-second. No, no; they are gone, and we must take our departure; and very soon we shall have done with the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-four. I would to God, my dear people, you knew the value of your Sabbaths. Many of you do know their value, and improve them to God's glory, and your own eternal comfort, as you shall find at last. And I rejoice to think that as our Sabbaths roll round, you are ever ready to meet, gladly to meet, any appeal to Christian charity that is made to you. You often make us feel thankful to God by your Christian liberality; and your conduct last Sunday was such as to excite our thanksgivings to God, and our love to you. But stop: you may give us your gold; you may help others to hear God's holy Word, to keep open this house of prayer; but if you never are made rich with true riches yourselves, though, out of a feeling of benevolence, or of attachment to the church and to the king, you are glad to support constituted authorities, and to uphold the worship of God among us, and to do what you can to promote the service of God, and of his church—I say all that may be done, but you must go further than that, or you will never get to heaven. There must be conversion of the heart; there must be an earnestness in the spirit of your minds; there must be a becoming regenerate and born again.

Now, then, I say, we are all about to take our departure from this year—we from it, and it from us. But I look around me, and how many smiling, happy, youthful, healthful, intelligent faces, how many children do I see! But I look again from my congregation to my text, and I read of “wives and children:” “And they all brought us on our way with wives and children.” Yes, through God's mercy our family blessings are preserved. True it is, death



has in many cases divided families, and laid some of them low. But here you are this day before God, with the partners of your hearts, and the little ones whom God hath given to you. We rejoice; we bless his holy name, that as to those who have suffered losses, and trials, and bereavements, God knows we have tried to comfort them, and to wipe away the tears of sorrow from their eyes. But how many a happy family is now in the presence of God! And therefore, if we speak of our unworthiness, we have to speak of our mercies too. O how good has God been unto us during the year that is almost gone! Methinks he tries which shall conquer: he has a way of trying with his mercies. Yes; behold the loving-kindness of God: think of the Lord's goodness to your families. How has he preserved your wives, your children, your friends, your relatives! I demand that he has the glory of them. I do not know anything more delightful than to notice the providences, and to notice the mercy and grace of God: and well does good old Matthew Henry, in his Commentaries, say, "Those who notice mercies shall never want mercies to notice. O Christian people, think of the abundant goodness and mercy of our God to you in the years that are past, and especially in that which is now almost come to its close.

But my text speaks of these ALL KNEELING DOWN ON THE SHORE, AND PRAYING. "And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way: and they all brought us on our way with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore and prayed." St. Paul was a great traveller. At one time we find him consecrating the waters, as it were, by his prayers, and at another time consecrating the hills and mountains. At one time we find him in the dungeon at Philippi, even at midnight, praying and singing praises to God. And now we see him with his fellow travellers, and a little company that attended him out of the city, anxious to get the last word with him, and to have his parting benediction, attending him some way out of the city; and then by the shore they all kneeled down. My brethren, are we not, so to speak, at the present time, about to embark very soon upon another year—upon the troubled waters, it may be, of another year—or the smooth waters, it may be, of another year? But whether it shall be troubled water, or whether it shall be smooth water, where is the man that can tell me? Who can say what a day shall bring forth? Who can say of this present congregation, how many before the end of the next year shall be sleeping beneath us, or how many shall be spared?

Can I then prevail on some who have very little knowledge of the comfort of prayer, very little knowledge of the blessedness of prayer, very little knowledge of the solace of prayer to the wounded heart in the day of affliction and trouble—can I prevail upon every one who hears me this morning, solemnly, devoutly, this day to listen to the call of their God? I have many a prayerless person in the church to-day, I have no doubt; O, I should think it one of the happiest days of my life if one, or ten, or twenty, or fifty, who never in their lives prayed to God before, were to begin to-day. Shall I give you reasons for it? I can do that. I could tell some careless fathers, that if they had been praying fathers, their children might have grown up to be like them; their children might have grown up to be a comfort to them, instead of growing up in some instances

almost to break their hearts. O what an awful thing it is for a young man to have to think (for filial duty would keep him from saying) as he follows his father to the grave—"O, my father never talked to me about my soul—never prayed to God for me—never taught me to go in the right way!" And is it natural to the human heart to find the right way, and to walk in it? Are we all so predisposed to holiness, and righteousness, and godliness, that the parent has no need to give any instruction? Ah, my dear hearers, you know the disposition is all the other way. I may perhaps be calling on some father of a family, to begin in good earnest to pray to God, and to seek him, who shall never live to hear the concluding sermon of another year. O that we could but induce you! There is a mighty influence used to prevent men; not merely human influence—there is a stronger influence than that: there is one who watched over you ever since you were born, with no kindly feeling, with no desire for your good, but intending to do all the evil he could. And he has carried the intention into execution: he has watched over you with the desire of inducing you to walk in that prayerless way on earth, which shall lead to eternal misery in another world. Shall he be gratified any longer? With some he has been gratified long enough.

But there is another that has watched over you; there is the Father of mercies and the God of grace. He has seen you from your cradle; and what has he seen? Some of you growing up, walking in the way of the world, breaking his laws, profaning his holy Sabbaths, and to this present hour living without ever earnestly praying to him. Now the wonder is that he should ever send you another messenger. O, hear the fifty-second messenger of the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-four; hear the Sabbath of this day. But if you will not hear, what then? Why then we make our appeal to the coming of the Great Judge, who shall come after all his messages have been resisted: then we make our appeal to that day, when the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him; when he shall sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall divide them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.

One word, and I have done. If you wish to testify your gratitude to Almighty God for his goodness in the year that is past, and if you wish to be prepared for a profitable and truly religious spending of the year that we trust is coming to you, let me recommend you to be much in self-examination. Think of the fifty-one Sabbaths that have preceded this. Have you advanced fifty-one steps in the way to heaven? Are there not some of you who have not taken the first step? Is it so? If it be, the thought is indeed distressing. But, thank God, there are many of you who are walking in the right way. Still, not knowing what shall befall you, about to embark (so to speak) upon the waters of a new year, kneel down upon the shore and pray; commend yourselves to God; bring your little ones around your family altar; tell them of your own youthful days and early mercies; tell them of your pious parents, perhaps gone to heaven, and of whom they may have known but little. I believe that Christianity has a charm when it comes in connexion with family blessings: it tends to sweeten all, to dignify all, and invite all, by pointing us to another and a better world; by telling us of the Father of mercies and of the God of love. Is that all? No; while it reproofs pointedly, sharply, severely, it tells of a Saviour; it points to

the blood of sprinkling. And with that thought I conclude. Come with all the sins of the year: I am trying to take mine there; do you bring yours, and may I bring mine, confessing them all before the great Atoning Sacrifice. May we obtain mercy through the blood of the cross, and then find grace to help in the time of need.

## THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS.

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REV. H. MELVILL, A.M.

CAMDEN CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, DECEMBER 28, 1834.

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"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."—MATTHEW, ii. 17, 18.

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On the evening of the last Sabbath, we selected as our subject of discourse, the incredulity of St. Thomas; assigning as our reason, that the Church had devoted that day to the commemoration of this Apostle. We stated, that it seemed desirable, that the sermon should on such occasions be connected with the service of the day, that the design of the Church in the institution of festivals might not be altogether overlooked. It is this principle which guides us in our present choice of subject, the day being Innocents Day, or that which the Church dedicates to the memory of the innocents massacred by Herod at Bethlehem. We believe, that, however at first sight this occurrence might seem barren of the material of profitable meditation, there is needed nothing but careful investigation, in order to the extracting such material in no ordinary quantity.

We may suppose you familiar with the occurrence itself, so that we need glance but briefly at the history. There had come wise men from the East, guided by a star, inquiring in Jerusalem for one born King of the Jews. This inquiry roused the jealousy and alarm of Herod, who then swayed the sceptre of Jerusalem; and he accordingly convened the chief priests and scribes, in order that they might decide on the testimony of prophecy as to the birth-place of Christ. Herod, you observe, supposed that the infant king after whom the Magi inquired, could be none other than the promised Messiah; and yet, with an infatuation scarcely conceivable, he set himself to plot his destruction. There is no more striking instance on record of open and undisguised opposition to God. Herod believed the prophecies, (for he referred to them in order to decide where the Christ should be born,) and yet he acts as though he supposed it possible to prevent what God had decreed. He literally takes prophecy as his guide, and endeavours to arrest its accomplishment. We say of this, that it is unparalleled as an exhibition of the madness of the human heart, when left by God to its own devices. To receive as the declaration of God, that a King should be born and should reign, and yet to endeavour to prevent such a declaration from taking effect—you will not easily find in all the annals of wickedness so deliberate an act of insolence and rebellion. The chief priests and scribes had no difficulty in answering the question of Herod; the prophet

Micah had so definitely pointed out the birth-place of Christ, that they unanimously replied, "In Bethlehem of Judea." This answer is conveyed to the wise men of the East; and Herod sends them to Bethlehem, desiring to be informed if their search was successful, that he too might come and worship the young child. The Magi departed; and the star which led them from their distant home conducted them to the house where Jesus was. They presented to the child the gold, and the frankincense, and the myrrh: but God, who knew the treachery of Herod, allows them not to return to Jerusalem; when this their homage was paid they are bidden to depart into their own country another way; and ere the news of their departure could be carried to Jerusalem, Joseph receives a command to fly into Egypt, with the young child and his mother, and there to await another communication from God.

The safety of Christ being thus secure, the fury of Herod is allowed to break forth. Finding himself mocked by the wise men, and baffled in the destruction of his infant rival, he thought to effect by an indiscriminate slaughter, what he could not do by selecting his victim. He takes therefore a large sweep, caring nothing what number was sacrificed, so that he might be secure that the one whom he hated could not escape. He "sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men." Then it was, says St. Matthew, that the prophecy quoted in our text was fulfilled; a prophecy which describes Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, as weeping for her lost children, and refusing to be comforted.

There can be no doubt, that we have here rather an accommodation, than an accomplishment, of the prediction. The slaughtered children were probably for the most part of the tribe of Judah; and though some amongst them might have been of the tribes of Joseph and Benjamin, yet the prophecy referred primarily to another event. We can hardly think that Rachel would have been mentioned in preference to her who was the mother of Judah: indeed if you refer to Jeremiah, you may readily perceive that it relates chiefly to other occurrences. It is found in the thirty-first chapter of that prophet; a chapter which, it is on all hands agreed, expects its fulfilment in the final restoration of the Jews and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. After a beautiful description of the return of the twelve tribes, Rachel is introduced as weeping for her lost children, and as bidden by God to refrain her voice from weeping, and her eyes from tears. But it is evident, from what is subjoined, that captive children, and not dead, were the object of the mother's lament. "Thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border." This sufficiently shews that, however the prophecy may be accommodated to the slaughter of Bethlehem, it looks for its accomplishment in yet future events.

The representation is just what follows. By a fine poetic figure, Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, and from whom therefore descended large portions of the kingdoms, both of Israel and Judah, is supposed to arise from her sepulchre, and to behold the land inhabited by strangers, and deserted by her posterity. She looks around sorrowfully on the scene; and weeps at the thought, that those to whom the territory had been given are exiles, wanderers,



and captives. Thus it is the dispersion, through long centuries, of the twelve tribes, which is delineated. The mother comes up from her tomb, and finding herself amongst strangers, and not, as she expected, amongst her children, gives way to maternal anguish, and sorrows over the banished ones, her sons and her daughters. And when the Lord speaks comfortably to her, and tells her of the return of her children, the reference is unquestionably to that glorious restoration of Israel and Judah which is associated with the blessedness of all the nations of the earth.

But while such seems the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jeremiah, it might be accommodated, with the nicest accuracy, to the slaughter at Bethlehem. If the mother were ever to be roused from her slumbers, what so likely to awaken her as the piercing shriek of her little ones in the grasp of the murderers? She had been poetically delineated as rising from her sleep when the land had cast out her children; as though the tread of the foreigners disturbed her in her grave. Now if she could not rest when the turf beneath which she lay groaned under the tramp of the stranger and blasphemer, shall she not be stirred when the shrill cry of her own infant is echoed in her sepulchre? Rachel was buried between Rama and Bethlehem; so that the children were almost massacred on the tomb of the parent. It was therefore a fine adaptation of the prediction, though the event was not that originally contemplated, when St. Matthew quoted the prophecy of Jeremiah, as descriptive of what occurred through the cruel orders of Herod, representing the mother as called back into life by the shrieks and the groans of her little ones, and returning to earth, that she might bewail, with an inconsolable mourning, her innocent offspring butchered by an unrelenting tyrant. O, there never was a more touching image in poetry than this, of the dead mother stirring in her grave at the cry of her children, and rising from the dust which was soaked with their blood, that she might water it with her tears.

Now it is enough thus to have shewn you, that the prophecy adduced in our text, though not strictly fulfilled in the slaughter of the innocents, may readily be accommodated to that tragic occurrence. Indeed, as it has been well observed, though St. Matthew uses the word "fulfilled," he does not employ the form of expression by which inspired writers generally mark the accomplishment of prophecy. He does not say, "that it might be fulfilled," but simply, "then was fulfilled." The former expression denotes that the event took place on purpose that the prediction might be accomplished; and thus distinctly points out that event as the object of the prophecy. But the latter expression—"then was fulfilled"—seems satisfied, if we suppose so accurate a correspondence between the thing done and the words quoted, that the writing may be regarded as descriptive of the occurrence.

We waive, however, further reference to the prophecy, and will not confine our attention to the event whose history we have briefly reviewed. Undoubtedly it seems strange, that one of the earliest consequences of the incarnation of Him, who afterwards declared that he came not to destroy men's lives, but to save, should thus have been the murder of so many unoffending little ones. We know not indeed what number fell in the massacre; but whether great or small, there is the same cause of surprise, that the birth of Christ should have been allowed to give occasion to so ferocious an act. Probably the number

was not large; inasmuch as Bethlehem and its dependent districts, are not likely to have included a very considerable population. The enemies indeed of revealed religion, anxious to fasten on Christianity a sanguinary character, or to invalidate its claims, reckon up a prodigious number of victims: so that Voltaire, one of the most determined foes of our faith, estimates at seventy thousand the children slaughtered at Bethlehem. Such exaggerated statements carry with them their own confutation; for it is easy to see, that, on such a supposition, Bethlehem must have been much more populous than the most overgrown of modern cities. Resorting, however, to a less suspicious source, we find the Greeks, in their Calendar, and the Abyssinians, in their Offices and Liturgy, commemorate the death of fourteen thousand babes. Had the number been so large, it would be difficult to account for the fact, that Josephus, the historian of the Jews, makes no mention at all of the slaughter. The omission is not at all strange if the number were small; for the murder of a few children might well be overlooked in giving the history of so blood-thirsty a tyrant as Herod: others of his actions were so far more atrocious, that the annalist might omit what seems trifling in comparison. But if thousands were slain, then even the desire of Josephus to keep back all that had reference to Jesus, would scarcely, we think, explain his silence. And it is with the view of bringing us into this dilemma, that Voltaire so grossly exaggerates the slaughter of Bethlehem, and to draw an inference against the veracity of St. Matthew. On the largest computation there seems no reason to suppose that so many as one hundred children perished in this massacre; the computation being of course made with reference to the probable population of Bethlehem, and to the fact, that none but the male children were objects of the fury of Herod.

But while it was necessary that we should glance at this matter, as knowing the misrepresentations of the enemies of Christianity, we own that some surprise may be felt at God's permitting the transaction, which is not to be removed by shewing that no great number was slain. We fully admit that there is something strange in the transition from the birth of Christ to the slaughter of these infants. A few days ago we assembled around the cradle of the new-born King; and now the ground round about us is strewn with the bodies of the young ones, slaughtered, as it were, in his stead. Then there were cherubim and seraphim to sing his birth-song; and now the air is laden with the cries of those who had done no wrong, and who are perishing on his account. Well might he afterwards declare, that he came not to send peace, but a sword upon the earth; seeing that, while yet a nursling in his mother's arms, he is the occasion of the sword being plunged in numbers who least deserved to die. And the thing most remarkable in this transaction appears to us to be, that the permission of the slaughter was in no sense requisite to the safety of Christ. Joseph, and Mary, and the child, had departed for Egypt, before the fury of Herod is allowed to break out. How easy does it seem that Herod should have been informed of the flight, and thus taught the utter uselessness of his cruel edict. But measures were taken with a view of preventing this; the Magi are not allowed to return to Jerusalem: and yet supposing they had returned, and had told Herod of the success of their search, and that in the meantime God had given the warning, and secured the flight of the Holy Family, why, so far as appears on the surface of things, the certainty is that Christ would have been



equally safe : and the likelihood is, that the innocents of Bethlehem would not have been slain. The probability seems vastly on the side of the supposition, that Herod would have ascertained that the child whom he sought had escaped, and he would not then, with all his cruelty, have perpetrated an act by which he could not have been benefited. This, we perceive, is the most remarkable point of view under which the transaction presents itself. It seems to have been designed by Providence that Herod should be left without the knowledge which would have prevented the massacre ; though that knowledge might have been conveyed, without, as it would appear, endangering the safety of Christ. And we are tempted to ask why this should have been—why the Magi should have been forbidden to carry intelligence which, without detriment to the newborn Messiah, might have preserved from the sword the infants of Bethlehem. We should think little that numbers died for Him who came to die for the world, had the sacrifice been apparently demanded for his safety : but when that safety might have been secured without the bloody offering, we are tempted to marvel that the birth of the Prince of Peace should have brought death to so unoffending a company.

Now, we have several considerations to advance on the history before us, when thus regarded as presenting a transaction which seems at variance with the known mercy of God. It will be further unavoidable in discoursing on the slaughter of the innocents, that we shall refer generally to the death of children : so that it will be well that we employ the remainder of our time in examining, in the first place, the consequences of this slaughter, so far as others were concerned ; and, in the second place, its consequences so far as the innocents themselves were concerned.

We begin by observing, that it is in no sense necessary to the vindication of God's dealings, that we should always be able to give reasons for their every part. We keep fast to certain principles, which we are sure, from the nature of God, are never violated by any permission or proceeding. But we have no right to expect of their non-violation, that it should always be matter of sight and never of faith. It is one of these principles, that whatever evil God permits, he overrules for good ; but it would be asking what does not consist with a state of probation, if we required that we might always be able to discern the good produced from the evil permitted. It is a fine expression which the Psalmist uses in speaking of God : "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains ; thy judgments are a great deep." The righteousness, you observe, of the Almighty, stands forth as one of the huge mountains of the earth, not to be over-looked by any who admit his existence. But then the judgments which this righteousness directs, are all the while as the vast ocean from which the mountain rises, not to be estimated by finite scrutiny. We have no right, therefore, to be staggered by any proceeding, even should it seem to us productive not of good, but of unmingled evil. It is only confessing our own short-sightedness, and no impeachment of the righteousness of God, when we admit, in respect of a providential dispensation, that its wisdom and its goodness lie far beyond our penetration. So that if unable to discover that the slaughter of the innocents were a means to ensure wise ends, we shall be confident, from the actual occurrence of the thing, that there was such an end, though not to be

ascertained by our limited faculties. We do not, however, allow of the transaction in question, that no reason can be discovered for its permission. We believe, on the contrary, that they who inquire at all carefully, will find enough to remove all surprise, that Herod was not restrained from the murder. Let it be first observed, that the prophecy had fixed Bethlehem as the birth-place of the Christ, and had determined, with considerable precision, the time of the nativity. It were easy, therefore, to prove, that no one could be the Messiah who had not been born at Bethlehem, and about the period when the Virgin became a mother. How wonderfully, then, did the slaughter of the innocents corroborate the pretensions of Jesus. If no one could be Messiah unless born at Bethlehem, and at a certain time, why the sword of Herod did almost demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah: for removing, perhaps, every other, who could have answered to the test of the time and place of birth, there seems only Jesus remaining in whom the prophecy could be fulfilled. We regard this as a very striking reason why the slaughter may have been permitted. God was providing for the conviction of those who should search into the pretensions of Jesus, or of leaving all inexcusable who should reject these pretensions. There was an universal agreement that Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem, and about the time of the slaughter; and what then did the slaughter do, if only Jesus survived, but prove distinctly that Jesus must be the Messiah?

Besides, it should be carefully remarked, that Jesus was to live in comparative obscurity, until thirty years of age; he was then to burst suddenly upon the world, and to amaze it by displays of omnipotence. But brought up as he had been at Nazareth (Bethlehem, though his birth-place, not being the residence of his parents), it was very natural that, when he emerged from long seclusion, he should have been regarded as a Nazarite. Accordingly we find so completely had his birth-place been forgotten, that many objected his being of Nazareth, against the possibility of his being the Messiah. "Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" They argued rightly, you observe, that no one could be the Christ who had not been born at Bethlehem, but then they rashly concluded, that Jesus wanted this sign of Messiahship, because they knew him to have been brought up in Galilee. And what made them inexcusable? Why the slaughter of the innocents. They could not have been uninformed of this event; bereaved parents were still living, who would be sure to tell the story of their wrongs; and this event marked, as with a line of blood, the period at which the Christ was supposed to have been born. How, easy, then to ask whether the parents of Jesus had been then at Bethlehem; how easy to determine it, seeing the period was that at which the Roman Emperor required every Jew to repair to his own city. So that there was not needed any laborious investigation, any searching into genealogies and records, in order to the deciding where Jesus was born: the massacre of the innocents was a proof, known to the most illiterate, that thirty years before there had been born a child at Bethlehem, whose nativity had been attended by such signs as disturbed the king on the throne. A moment's inquiry would have proved to them that Jesus was this child, and removed the doubt which attached to him as a supposed Galilean. And therefore not in vain was the mother stirred from her sepulchre

by the cry of her infant offspring; the echo of her lament might still be heard in the land, and those who listened not to the witness of the birth-place of Jesus stood self-condemned, while rejecting him on the plea, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

This is, however, not the whole of what we have to advance as to the reason why God permitted this slaughter of the innocents: we think, indeed, that you can no longer pronounce it unintelligible why Herod should have been allowed, when it was clearly unnecessary for the safety of Christ, to stain his hand with the blood of these innocents. But we go on to remark, that, very possibly, it would not have sufficed that Christ should have left Bethlehem, and that his escape should have been known to the tyrant. We may believe that when Herod had destroyed all the children, he supposed his object gained, and made no further search; but if assured that Christ had foiled him, there would have been inquiry and pursuit. Of course we do not say, that the inquiry and the pursuit would have succeeded, so that the Lord's anointed would have been slain ere his work had been accomplished; but certainly the inquiry and the pursuit, carried on, as they probably would have been, by Archelaus as well as Herod, would have fixed that attention on Christ from which, for wise ends, God designed to withdraw him, and destroy that undisturbed privacy in which it was appointed his earlier years should be spent. Therefore, brethren, there seems something quite admirable—we had almost said beautiful—in the arrangement. Supernatural signs attend the birth of Christ, sufficient, when he shall have entered on his ministry, to attest his pretensions: but his ministry is not to commence until he is thirty years old; and during this long season he is not to excite the jealousy of rulers, and thus prematurely stir feelings which might interfere with the business of his mission. Ever his birth had already done this. How then can he remain hidden, and fail to attract the notice which he desired to shun? Why, Herod is left to follow his cruel devices: he supposes himself successful; he has slain all the infants at Bethlehem, and therefore, as he thinks, the child of miracle amongst the number: he desists from further search, and the Messiah may grow up comparatively unobserved. And thus we think that the slaughter at Bethlehem was just that event which allowed of Christ being born with all the signs which were necessary to the proving him God's Son, and yet to withdraw him from that public observation which he was not to attract till he entered on his ministry. So that, however at first sight this massacre of the children may appear to us to have been unnecessary, a crime whose permission was overruled to no ends not equally subserved by its prevention—we gather from a careful examination, that reasons of great importance may be assigned why God allowed this signal act of cruelty.

Neither have we touched in our foregoing remarks on reasons which are more obvious, and which we may suppose would have suggested themselves to your own minds. We may believe that God was leaving Herod to fill up the measure of his guilt, that he might exhibit in his instance a great display of retributive justice. Within a very short time Herod perished by a complication of plagues as amazing as his unparalleled crimes. You may remember he is described in the Acts of the Apostles as smitten by the angel of God; and we learn from history that his diseases were terrible beyond what thought could conceive;

and, designing at the outset of Christianity to give a fearful proof that even in this world wickedness shall not always go unpunished, God allowed the tyrant to become notorious by his endeavour to destroy the Christ, that his fall might be a warning to persecutors of the Church.

Add to all this, that God was unquestionably disciplining the parents by the slaughter of the children. We know nothing of the fathers and mothers thus cruelly bereaved of their offspring; but we can have no difficulty in supposing that in every case the affliction was just that which was needed. "Indeed," you may say, "could so painful a visitation have been more required by the families of Bethlehem, than by those of other towns?" We pretend not to be exactly able to answer this question. No man can tell me why fierce diseases sharp as Herod's sword, are allowed to enter on households or on cities, and sweep away the suckling, whilst other households, or other cities, escape the dispensation. The sword only took the place of fever: and, as we readily believe that, in desolating one district by sickness, and sparing another, God suits his dealings to the moral wants of the individuals, we must also believe that when massacre, and not sickness, was his engine, he consulted best for the parents of Bethlehem by smiting, and for those of Jerusalem by sparing. Neither does it seem to us difficult to conjecture, that the death of these little ones may have been morally more required by the Bethlehemites than by others. There was at this time a great and general expectation of the Messiah, and the Jewish mothers must have more than ever hoped for the honour of giving birth to the deliverer: but of course such hope must have been stronger in Bethlehem than in any other town, seeing that prophecy was supposed to mark it as the birth-place. Hence we may readily believe that the infants of Bethlehem were objects of extraordinary interest to their parents—objects in which their ambition centred, as well as their affection. And if such were the fact, it is manifest, even to our imperfect faculties, that these fathers and mothers stood specially in need of that discipline which God administers to parents by the death of their children; and we can understand that there was a suitableness in the dispensation as allotted to Bethlehem, which might not have been discovered had another town been its object.

Now, if you combine the reasons thus advanced, they quite remove all appearance of strangeness from God's permission of the slaughter of the innocents. We are not insensible to the pitiableness of the spectacle; and, we readily admit that, at first sight, it seems almost unaccountable, that, since Christ's safety could have been equally provided for, Herod was not told of the escape, and thus kept back from the massacre. Why this fierce eruption into the families of the city? Can it consist with the attributes of God to allow, where there is apparently no end to be served, that the little ones of a whole town shall be rudely torn from the breast of the mother, or the knee of the father; and that those who were yet too unacquainted with evil to do any thing but smile in the face of their murderer, should be the hecatomb offered at the birth of the Redeemer? We deny that no end is subserved by the permission. and when we have observed that the slaughter of the innocents gave so strong a proof that Jesus was the Christ, as left inexcusable the infidelity of his countrymen—that it helped to secure that seclusion and privacy of the Saviour which was the appointed preliminary to his public ministrations; when we yet further observe



that God was about to make Herod the signal monument of his vengeance, and that he might well therefore be expected to allow him to follow the bent of his own passions; and add to all this, that undoubtedly the children died that the parents might be disciplined; and add that, probably in Bethlehem there was extraordinary need that fathers and mothers should be spectators to those sufferings of their little ones; when, we say, these reasons are combined, though we may be as sensible as we please to the horrors of the massacre, and shrink from the picture of the desolated town, we can no longer pronounce it inexplicable, or unworthy of God, that cause should have been given for so universal a shriek in the streets of Bethlehem, as might be said to have raised the dead mother from her tomb, and compel Rachel, long ago set free from sorrow, to return and take part in the wretchedness of her family.

Now, we are quite aware that all this reasoning would be invalidated, if it could be shown that a real and everlasting injury were done to the innocents themselves. We know that God visits on children the iniquities of their fathers, and we vindicate such visitation from the charge of injustice, by maintaining that no eternal punishment falls on the offspring for the crime of the ancestor, and that as to temporal punishment, those who receive it will be vastly more benefited. But, if the children were necessarily everlastingly injured, we know not how the apparent injustice could be denied, or excused; and thus in the instance under review, we may show ends answered by the massacre of the innocents, but if the innocents themselves were in the fullest sense to suffer, it would be hard to prove that God's permission was just.

This leads us to the second point which we proposed to examine—the consequences of the slaughter as far as the innocents themselves were concerned.

Now, there is much under this head of discourse to require and repay careful examination. We have an unhesitating belief in respect of all children admitted into God's church, and dying before they know evil from good, that they are saved by the virtues of Christ's propitiation. We are prepared to state nothing but our ignorance in respect of unbaptized children; those who have never been brought outwardly into the covenant of redemption. We are far enough from saying that such children perish; but their condition is that of heathenism. Baptism it is which converts the Gentile into the Christian, so that the unbaptized child, as not being included within the visible church, can only be regarded as a heathen; and we know not its condition if it die, simply because we know not the exact laws by which the heathen shall be judged. Now, of all baptized children, dying ere old enough to commit actual sin, we are thoroughly persuaded that they enter into heaven, and are made partakers of everlasting blessedness. An adult person has in him the guilt both of original sin and of actual, but the infant only of original. The infant has, indeed, this guilt of original sin; else why does it die whilst yet at its mother's breast, and thus share in the mortality which only sin has provoked? We know not how any one can question original sin who has marked the sufferings of a babe, or seen its little coffin borne to the church-yard. But, if the infant has certainly the guilt of original, just as certainly it has not that of actual transgression. There can be no transgression where there is no knowledge of law; and the faculties must be opened ere the knowledge can be gained. But, what-

ever the other virtues of baptism, it seems most reasonable to believe that it removes from its every object original sin. Baptized as we are into Christ's death, the power of that death, we doubt not, is so applied to us in this solemn sacrament, as to purge away the stains transmitted from our forefather. There is one great sense in which baptism is the sign of regeneration: the child that was born an alien is received into God's family, and it is only by committing actual sin that it can again be brought into condemnation: and if therefore the child thus renewed and accepted in Christ, die, ere old enough for moral accountableness, it seems impossible to question the salvation of this child. Original guilt is removed, and actual guilt there is none: and what then shall prevent the entrance of the immortal spirit into heaven?

Such is our persuasion, with the reasons on which it rests, with regard to those who are taken away in their infancy. We never hesitate to tell parents sorrowing for their dead children, who had been old enough to endear themselves by the smile and the prattle, but not old enough to know moral good from moral evil, that they have a right to feel such assurance of the salvation of their offspring, as the best tokens could scarcely have afforded had they died in riper years.

And we would not, in offering this consolation, limit it, as some do, to parents who give evidence of vital religion. It has always seemed to us one of the most unwarranted of the theories put forth by that great ornament of the dissenting community, Dr. Watts, that all infants except those of pious parents are annihilated at death. This eminent person—for few ever rivalled him in varied ability—maintained strongly the likelihood, that the bodies of those who die in infancy have no resurrection, and that their souls are extinguished by an act of Omnipotence, making, however, an exception in favour of such babes as have been born of religious fathers and religious mothers. To us the theory appears most rash and untenable, even with the exception, and still more without it—that God should quench the spirit of immortality which he has once lighted. We doubt not his power, were he pleased thus to employ it: but the spirit within us pleads so emphatically against the possibility of extinction, that, unless Scripture asserted it, we cannot believe that any kindred principle is created to perish. It were to darken and almost to dislocate my every hope of immortality, to prove to me that human souls once called into being could ever cease to exist: and even if this were overcome, the excepting certain infants, and the making the exception depend on the parent, would surround the theory with insuperable difficulties. That the character of father and mother is to determine whether there shall or shall not be annihilation of a soul—whether there shall or shall not be resurrection of a body—this were ascribing to one set of beings such an influence over the eternal destinies of another, as has, we think, no warrant in Scripture, and no vindication in reason. Indeed, we are assured from the Bible, that all men who are to be judged hereafter, shall be judged by their works: and how can infants, it may be asked, who have done no works, ever answer this description? At least it should be observed, that this difficulty, if a difficulty at all, belongs to one infant as much as to another; and if, therefore, it avails nothing against the children of the righteous, neither can it against the children of the unrighteous. But we find no difficulty whatever. All shall be judged by their works: this is unquestionable, for it is the broad

assertion of holy writ: but the infant sinned in Adam, and is therefore accounted by God as having done evil: and the infant grafted by baptism into Christ, is accounted by God as having wrought righteousness. The infant therefore shall be tried by works—works in which it had as actual a share as the full-grown man. Has it sinned? Yes, in Adam. Then it must die. Has expiation been made for its sin? Yes, in Christ, of whose body it had been made by baptism a member; and righteous wrath is set against the sentence. And as truly as with the adult—respect, of course, being had to the capacities of the two—the infant is tried by its works, and consigned, as the result of the trial, to everlasting blessedness.

We are not then to be moved by any argument or any authority, from believing it proved by the nature and terms of the Christian covenant, that all baptized children, dying ere they commit actual sin, find entrance into the kingdom of heaven. And however melancholy the thought, that so many of our fellow men live without God, and die without hope, it is cheering to believe, that perhaps a yet greater number are saved through the sacrifice of Christ. Far more, we suppose, than a third of our population die before old enough for moral accountableness: and thus, how large a fraction of the Christian community is safely housed ere exposed to the blight and the tumult of the world. O, the “perfected possession” would not want inhabitants if all, who could choose for themselves, chose death, and not life; heaven would still gather within its capacious bosom, a shining multitude, who just descended to earth that they might there be grafted into the body of Christ, and then, flew back to enjoy all the privileges of membership; headed by the slaughtered little ones of Bethlehem—those who dying, we might almost say, for the Saviour, won something like the martyrs’ crown, which shall, through eternity, sparkle on their foreheads. Who, then, shall say that Herod was permitted to do a real injury to those innocents, and that thus their death is an impeachment on the justice or the mercy of God? We may be assured that they escaped many cares, difficulties, and troubles, with which a long life must have been charged; for they might have remained on earth till Judah’s desolation began, and have shared in the worst woes which ever fell on a land. And better was it for them—even if certain that they would all, at last, have attained eternal life—that they were removed from the earth ere it shook under the vengeance of God, than had they been left to bear their parents to the grave, and wish themselves with them as they marked the gathering of divine wrath.

Indeed we will not dare to affirm, that it would be always a privilege to die young, though we can be assured that God, who does best whatsoever he does, consults most for the advantage of the child whom he allows not to become man. It is common, we think, on the death of children, to hear as a topic of consolation, that they have gained rather than lost by dying; the joys of heaven having been secured, and the cares of earth avoided. For our own part we are not prepared to make this affirmation. If it were necessarily and manifestly—so manifestly, we mean, that we could detect all the reasons—for the advantage of the child, that it died while yet young, it must follow that it would necessarily have been for the advantage of each one amongst ourselves, had we not been spared to manhood. But this we never can admit. I can thank God as heartily for the mercy that I died not in my boyhood, as for any other blessing



received at his hand. I can thank him for the development of my faculties, for the development of my reason, for the tracing his handy work in this magnificent dwelling-place, and acquainting myself with him as revealed in the Gospel of his Son. I can thank him for the opportunity allowed me of serving him in the flesh: it were no privilege not to have had the opportunity. I can thank him for the afflictions from which early death might have exempted me; for, rightly endured, they work out "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." So that we regard it as nothing better than the effusions of a poetic and sentimental theology, that the infant is necessarily advantaged by not living to be a man. We doubt not that the infant *is* advantaged, because we doubt not that God does nothing which is not, on the whole, for the best. But when men would prove the advantageousness by speaking of the trouble escaped, and the joy obtained, we remind them that, as to the troubles, they discipline us for eternity, and, as to the joys, they will undoubtedly be proportionate to present attainment. No, brethren; if now a believer in the Saviour of sinners, I have abundant cause for hearty thanksgiving that I died not in my infancy: I have a nobler prospect before me than I should had my days been shortened. I am sure of a greatness which I never could have reached had I only just touched the earth and sprung upwards, tarrying not either to taste its cares or to labour in its duties. That the powers of the infant will be matured in a future state, so that capacities not here unfolded will be brought out and perfected—and that employment in God's service denied below, will be granted above—this opinion cannot be doubted; though it may be difficult to conceive how the soul, fitted for being instructed in the regions of sense, shall reach her strength, and gain her knowledge, when stripped from the covering of this appointed machinery. But there can be no debate that the operations of eternity will be adjusted to our growth, whilst on earth, in the various Christian graces: and, therefore, neither does it seem to admit question, that the portion of infants will be amongst the lowest. We cannot suppose that the suckling, taken from the earth ere it could give itself to the service of God, will approach hereafter, in glory and blessedness, the veteran saint who has honoured his Maker during a long life, and laboured unweariedly to advance the kingdom of Christ. I can believe that the martyred innocents of Bethlehem shall wear a rich crown; but I cannot believe that it will be radiant as that of a Peter or a Paul.

I cannot believe, then, that it is a privilege to die young. Far better it will be to win the victory than to be spared the battle. Nevertheless it is impossible to prove, in any given case, that the infant is not advantaged by death. The infant might have lived an unbeliever many years, and have repented only when dying: certainly it were better to have passed at once into eternity, than to have denied God for half a century, and sought him in the last extremity, when, if there were time for the acting of faith, there was none for the working of love. And when you combine these several statements, you must perceive that, without supposing such a necessary advantageousness in early death as would make it more desirable than a life spent in faith and obedience, we may affirm of the innocents, that it was no injury to them that burial followed so quickly on birth. There is nothing therefore in God's permission of the murder which can be shown at variance with any divine truth. There were many ends, as we have proved to you, subserved by the permission; and we cannot doubt that the

innocents who fell by the sword at Bethlehem, gained by the exchange of earth for heaven. Hence the benefit to the survivors was purchased by no injustice to the slaughtered; and we trace the working of a righteous government in God's transaction with that sorrowing city.

The innocents of Bethlehem have always been reckoned by the Church amongst the martyrs; for, though incapable of making choice, God, we may believe, supplied the defect of their will by his own entertainment of their death. And it is beautiful to think, that as the spirits of these martyred little ones soared toward heaven, they may have been taught to look on the Infant in whose stead they had died; that He for whom they had been sacrificed was about to be sacrificed for them; and that they were mounting to glory on the merits of that defenceless babe, as he seemed then, hurrying as an outcast into Egypt. O, the voice of weeping might have been heard in Rama, but those over whom the roused mother lamented, had entered heaven as the first-fruits to God and the Lamb, and were already celebrating the praises of Him whose blood, not yet shed, had provided for their ransom. Well might Rachel be bidden to restrain her weeping. The address to the sorrowing parent, applicable, as it primarily is, to the restoration of the scattered Israelites, might yet be spoken in its every part to the mothers of Bethlehem, and to those who, in any age of the Church, bewail their dead infants—"Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border." The mother's travail in bearing the children, as well as her work of prayer and faith for her children, shall be rewarded by her beholding them return from the land of the last enemy, death, and landed in their own border, the heavenly Canaan.

Thus we can accommodate the whole prophecy referred to in our text, to the parents whom Herod's sword bereaved, and to those who, in our own day, bury their infants. And this is the practical use which we would make of the prophecy. Adapted as it is, by the Evangelist to the slaughter of Bethlehem, it may be regarded as a promise declaratory of the happiness of those who die young. "They shall come again from the land of the enemy." Their dust is as precious, and as carefully watched, as that of those who have fought the good fight, and professed a good profession before many witnesses. Their spirits have passed into the separate state; and there, with those of the patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and saints, await the morning of the resurrection, that they may "come again to their own border," a renovated creation changed into a new heaven and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. And if, then, death enter your families, and take as his prey those whose helplessness makes them especially the objects of your carefulness, you are not to lament with too intense a wailing, that the cradle is exchanged for the coffin—the warm embrace of the mother for the cold resting-place of the grave.

It is the last Sabbath of the year, as well as the Innocents Day. The funeral bell of the Innocents is the knell of another of our great divisions of time. There may be some of you who have buried young children during the past year; but too possibly there are others who will be called to this trial during the coming. Indeed it is a touching sight, that of parents performing the last

office to their children: it is like an inversion of the natural order. In the book of Genesis it is said, "And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity;" the circumstance being mentioned as worthy of note: Haran should have followed Terah, and not Terah Haran. We feel it natural—if any thing can be natural in a fallen and disorganized world—that children should close the eyes, and shroud the limbs of fathers and mothers, but unnatural that fathers and mothers should perform these sad duties for children. Hard seems it for the mother that she bring forth, and that what she had borne in anguish, and then gazed on in joy, should fade before her eyes, and wither in the bud, till she is forced to hide it in the earth, a wasted thing, and a cold, and a silent. But "they shall come again from the land of the enemy:" and therefore let those who have endured the bereavement, fortify themselves with the assurance, that to die young—whatever the other features of the case—is to die happily; and that, in taking from them children ere they knew evil from good, their heavenly Parent makes a better provision for them than their earthly could ever make; securing them a provision which would otherwise have hung in doubt—sparing them trouble which might not have worked for good—and educating them in a school where the only discipline is love, the only lesson immortality.

## THE WAY OF TRUTH

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REV. T. DALE, A.M.

ST. MATTHEW'S CHAPEL, DENMARK HILL, JANUARY 1, 1835\*.

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have chosen the way of truth : thy judgments have I laid before me."—PSALM cxix, 30.

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THE earth is peopled by an infinite variety of rational beings ; and yet, as in the expressions of the countenance, and the sound and the intonation of the voice, so in the structure of the mind, and in the impulses and affections of the heart, there are perhaps no two persons exactly alike. Hence the child early acquires the distinctive faculty which never forsakes the man ; and becomes intuitively conscious that there is a difference between persons, long before it is able to explain, or competent to discover, wherein that difference consists. The very infant will not usually pass from the mother's arms to those of a stranger, without manifest signs of unwillingness ; and the unpractised eye of childhood rarely needs any assistance, or calls for consideration, in fixing upon the familiar face in the midst of many others on which it has been habituated to look ; in the workings of the face it perceives nature's own impulse, the universal though unuttered language, the expression of sympathy, interest, confidence, and regard. Hence all know instinctively how to choose whom they may love, and how to abide by the choice when made. The first exercise of the intellect, is to separate from all others the parent, or the protector, or the friend ; and the choice, confirmed by habit, becomes a fixed and rooted affection, which grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength. We do not, indeed, say, that the child in whom intellect is just upon the dawn, is aware of all this ; but the reality of the fact is practically manifested, so far as the opportunity is presented of displaying it : for it is not the absence of weeks, or months, or sometimes even of years, that will efface from the youthful heart the features of the most loved countenance, or render the youthful ear insensible to the melody of that gentle voice which can proceed from one alone among the millions inhabiting the earth.

Now this—allowing for necessary variations—affords a lively image of the manner in which the pliant and ductile mind of youth may be trained to choose, not only “the way of truth,” but God, who is truth itself. It is certain, indeed, that He, who is a spirit, cannot be visibly present to the eye, or made sensibly perceptible to the ear : but he can be apprehended by the understanding, and he can be realized in the heart. And if, acting upon this principle from the first, the mother would avail herself of the influence which nature gives her, to

\* Addressed to Young Persons and Heads of Families.

point the opening intellect to God ; and if the father would avail himself of the influence which early impressions give, to instil into the expanding mind the first simple idea of God ; and if by both, or whoever may occupy their place, the associations of childhood were intertwined from the first with the practical conception of God here, God there, God everywhere—all objects formed by God, all benefits conferred by God, all trials imposed by God, and even all evils (for wise, though secret purposes) permitted by God—all words uttered in God's hearing, all actions performed in God's presence, all desires open to God's eye—all that is acted, uttered, conceived in secret, recorded and registered for God's judgment—if this were done from the first, the child might be trained, O how frequently ! to choose God in heart, as he has chosen his mother, by sense—and to realize Christ by faith, as he realizes his father, by sight—he might be won to enter, almost without a consciousness of effort, that strait gate at which so many agonize, and some in vain ; and to tread, almost without a thought of ever diverging or deviating, that strait and upward path of which many in later years have appeared to make trial for a season, but being disquieted or discouraged by the difficulties it presents, have, ere long, drawn back unto perdition.

Now, where there is a choice of persons, it is evident there can be a choice of things : and while, as to the present state of being, there is a great diversity of sensible objects to divide and to distract the attention of the young, in matters which concern the soul, the choice is greatly facilitated, because it can lie only between two. There may be, indeed, an endless variety of persons who walk in them, but the ways which lead across the wilderness to the grave, our common resting-place—and beyond the grave to the judgment-seat at which we must all stand—and beyond the judgment-seat of God, to the eternal and unchangeable abode of the undying soul, whether it be fixed in dungeons of darkness, or in mansions of unclouded light, in one or other of which every one of us must dwell for ever—the ways themselves are only two : and the writer of this divine Psalm has pointed them out to the observation of all, in the most simple and explicit terms ; terms which none can mistake or misinterpret, and which all can understand. There is *the way of lying*, concerning which he prays, “ Remove it far from me ;” *the way of truth*, concerning which he professes, “ I have chosen it.”

Now, “ the way of truth” is the way of *God* ; for the Lord is the God of truth : it is the way of *Christ* ; for, said he, “ I am the way, and the *truth*, and the life :” it is the way of *the Spirit* ; for “ the Spirit beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” And as all that we know of God, and all that we know of Christ, and all that we know of the Spirit—of God who made us by his power, of Christ who redeemed us by his blood, of the Spirit who renews us by his grace—is contained in the volume of the Holy Scriptures, “ the way of truth” is the way of God's word ; for when Jesus prayed for his disciples, “ Sanctify them through thy truth,” he added, “ Thy word is truth.” Contrariwise, “ the way of lying” is the way of the devil ; for “ he is a liar from the beginning, and the father of lies.” It is the way of our own hearts ; for “ the heart is deceitful above all things.” It is the way of the world ; for “ whoever will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God ;” and “ if any man will love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Consequent



“the way of truth” is the way of *life*, however hard, and rugged, and narrow it may seem; for “I am the way, and the truth, and the life:” and “the way of lying” is the way of *death*, however broad, and smooth, and flattering, and pleasant it may appear; for “there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is death:” and it is the latter of which Christ speaks when he declares that “broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that tread therein;” and of the former that he testifies that “narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it.”

Now, it is at once evident from all this, that there is a difference between these two ways, as wide as the gulf which separates heaven from hell; and that the one is, in reality, as much preferable to the other, as God, and Christ, and the spirits of the just made perfect—and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and all who shall sit down with them in the kingdom of heaven, are to be preferred, as companions throughout eternity, to the devils and ruined souls; as the New Jerusalem, the city that descendeth from God out of heaven, is a more desirable abode through everlasting ages, than dungeons of darkness and prisons of fire, wherein are weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. And so long as God’s judgments are laid in order before you, defining and disclosing the two opposing ways, and you distinguish clearly in what direction both are leading, and in what end each must terminate; there will not be, there cannot be, the slightest shadow of doubt in any mind: there will not be a moment’s pause to poise the balance, to adjust the standard, to count the cost. “I will choose the way of truth,” will be the *language* of every heart, however large a portion there may be whose *practice* would return a prompt and positive denial to the declaration, “*I have chosen it.*”

Now, listen a while, my young friends, and I will tell you from God’s word, not only what “the way of truth” is, but what is meant by choosing it. O, that when the impression of the present service shall have passed away, and you are again within the dangerous precincts of the world, and encompassed by the snares of the tempter—O that you may be concerned and decided to choose it: for it is *here* the purpose may be formed, and the desire awakened; but it is *elsewhere* that the steadfastness of either must be tried.

To choose “the way of truth,” then, is, first, to determine, with entire honesty of intention, and with full purpose of heart, that you will walk, as far as you know it, in the way of God’s precepts—entertaining, not only a confident hope, but cherishing a firm assurance, that so doing you shall attain, sooner or later, when the days of your appointed time are past, to the end of God’s promises. And as the word of an earthly parent is received with amplest credit, and the child, when properly trained, never doubts for a moment, that the engagements of a fond, indulgent mother, or the pious and consistent father, will be fulfilled to the utmost latitude of the letter, and in the fullest apprehension of the spirit; so it must be admitted, and established, and acted upon, as a first principle in choosing the way of truth, that what the Lord hath promised, the Lord—who is truer than the father to his first-born, more mindful than the mother of her sucking child—that what the Lord hath promised, he is able, and willing also to perform; and that while all things which are possible to unmatched power, and unmeasured wisdom, contrived by perfect nothingness,

and controlled by perfect love, are possible to Him, it is altogether impossible that one jot or tittle should pass from anything he has spoken, until all be fulfilled. And this conclusion is not to be formed once only, as if by a special effort of the mind, and then placed on one side, as if it might be safely forgotten or overlooked: it must have a place in the remembrances of every day. We must strive to awake every morning with a perception of the solemn vow that is upon us; and prefer every day a special prayer for that grace which alone can enable us to remember and to redeem it as we ought.

There are two questions—so simple in terms that every child may be able to propose them, and yet in substance so densely significant that the most advanced Christian can never overrate the mercies which they include, or overpass the obligations which they imply—there are two questions which, if asked and answered at the commencement of each recurring day, would be sufficient, not only to recommend, but to enforce, the choice of “the way of truth:” and these are—“What has God done for me this night?” and, “What am I to do for God this day?” “How many,” may the young Christian exclaim—“How many have laid down exhausted, and risen unrefreshed! How many have been full of tossings to and fro to the dawn of the day! How many who were crying at evening, ‘Would God it were morning!’ are now exclaiming at morning, ‘Would God it were evening!’ How many, in the thoughts of their head upon their bed, have pondered over images of horror, and prospects of darkness! How many have been started from sleep by the strugglings of an uneasy conscience, or scared with dreams, and terrified with visions! How many have gone to rest without a God to shield them; and, had the murderer’s stealthy step invaded their midnight sleep, or had the flames seized upon their dwelling, would have awakened in the grasp of a more fearful murderer, from whose power none could rescue—or in the consciousness of fiercer flames which the floods of many oceans could not quench or cool! But I have laid me down in peace, and slept; for the Lord sustained me; the Lord made me to dwell in safety: and now that I am entering upon another day, that I am commencing another stage of life, what shall I render unto the Lord for all his goodness unto me? How shall I set forth his glory? How shall I set forth his praise? How shall I prove that I desire to be his, and have received and realized the assurance that he is willing to be mine? How, but by choosing ‘the way of truth;’ by walking in the only path that can lead me to his presence in the end; by taking his Word as a light to my feet, and as a lamp to my path; by answering like ancient Samuel to the voice that calls to me as a child, ‘Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth;’ by repeating from my heart, as he said, ‘Seek ye my face,’ ‘Thy face, Lord, will I seek;’ by devoting myself to the practical obedience of those Holy Scriptures, which are able to make me, as they made the youthful Timothy, wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Young as I may be, and lowly as I may seem—little worthy of the notice, and little entitled to the regard of any but those who love me—not perhaps for myself, but because I am theirs—I, a youth, a child, almost an infant, am yet called upon to glorify God, to serve the Lord Christ, to reflect the graces of the Spirit—to work out my own salvation with fear and trembling—to wean my heart from earth, and to prepare my soul for heaven. O mighty and momentous work! a work to which the patriarch, or the prophet, or the

apostle, would not be competent if left to his own endeavours ; but to which I, though least and lowest in the kingdom of heaven, shall be made equal if I only seek the means ; for ‘ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me : ’ he hath declared that ‘ the Father hath hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes ; ’ and therefore I know that the babe may effect with him what the perfect man will in vain attempt without him ; and therefore, though I am the dullest of the dull, and the weakest of the weak, I am only the fitter subject for his glorious working ; for it is amid darkness that light shines forth, and strength is made perfect in weakness : when I am weak, then am I strong, if only the power of Christ shall rest upon me.”

While, however, to such “ the way of truth ” is, first, to determine that we will, if God help us, walk faithfully and constantly therein ; it is next to be careful that, so far as lies in our power, we act out what we have determined ; that we do not, like too many, ask one thing in our prayers, and seek another in our practice ; that we do not through the after stages engage in any occupation, or devote ourselves to any amusement, or join ourselves to any society, by which our early approach to God may be made to seem hypocrisy, and our very petitions be turned into sin. If it were sufficient for the soul’s health and safety, to utter a few prayers, and to read a few verses out of Scripture, at the commencement of the day, and we were then to be at liberty to follow wherever inclination, or fancy, or caprice, might lead—not only all children, but all men and women, would be religious at once ; that is, they would profess to serve God, and in reality serve Mammon : earth would be at once turned into a hell by the way, and yet all would expect in the end to inherit and to enjoy heaven. But as it is not only at the waking hour, or in the lessons of early morning, that the child obeys the mother’s voice, and heeds the father’s eye, but that voice and that eye retain their power and influence throughout the day ; and within sound of the one no evil would be admitted, and within sight of the other no evil would be allowed ; so, should it not be the same when the eye of our heavenly Father is ever on us, and when the voice of the Saviour is ever sounded in our ears—when we never attempt to do wrong, and seldom omit to do right, without the reproof in one case, and the remonstrance in the other, of the disturbed and disquieted conscience, ever prompt to take alarm, the messenger and the minister of God’s Holy Spirit—and when if we will not take heed and check ourselves in them, a cloud (and now I know I am speaking according to the experience of some of my young friends who have felt seriously) a cloud seems to darken upon the eyes, and a burden to press on the heart, and the very things which should minister to our comfort, and promote our happiness, lose all their former relish, and make us silent, serious, and sad ? O, if the child who is early taught to utter prayers, were taught, with equal care and diligence, that the eye of his God is upon him after he has risen from his knees—that at every instant, and in every place, it enwraps him, it encompasses, it penetrates him, it pervades him ; if the child who is early taught to read his Bible, were instructed, with equal care and diligence, that, when the volume has been closed, and the words have ceased to tremble on his lips, or vibrate on his ear, the spirit of them must be studied, and reflected in his life—that when he goeth it must lead him, and if he desire that while he sleepeth it should keep him, and when he walketh it

shall talk with him ; we might hope, we might rely, that the rising generation would correct their own ill tempers amidst a diseased and a fallen world—that the moral pestilence which walketh at noon-day, would fall in vain upon the breast that is fortified with the antidote of a pure and salutary joy ; the simplicity of Christian practice, founded on the singleness of Scripture principle, would foil and confound the tempter Satan, and might perhaps arrest, impress, and convert the tempter man. One who had been thus early initiated into the fear of God—I allude to the chaste and pious Joseph—was thus preserved from one of the most subtle and seducing snares that ever was laid for human virtue ; but the very simplicity and singleness of heart of which I speak, was itself a buckler of truth, an impenetrable shield : “ How can I do this great wickedness,” he asks, “ and sin against God ? ” The fearful idea of transgressing wilfully and presumptuously against God, with his eyes open, and his heart conscious of the sin, does not seem to have entered his mind as a possible thing. To harbour a wicked intention, knowing it to be such, was to him a moral contradiction : it was as far from his thoughts as uncovering his bosom to the envenomed arrow : it was opposed to all his early habits, and views, and principles. And wherefore was this, but because—unknown, perhaps, to himself—he had early made his choice, and firmly adhered to it ; he had formed his decision in childhood, and acted upon it in youth : and this was the object of his choice, and this the decision of his will—(O may it also be yours !) “ Thou art my portion, O Lord ; I have said that I have chosen the way of truth ; thy judgments have I laid before me.”

But now, my dear young friends, take heed : there is a third thing necessary, that you may safely choose the way of truth ; that it may be your comfort and ornament while you live—your support, your confidence, and your triumph when you die. O do not neglect this ; for though we name it last, it does in reality come first ; although you may not, at the beginning, be quite distinctly conscious of it ; but you would be sure to see it when you look back. Every one has seen it who has entered through the portal of Christ Jesus into the kingdom of Christ, opened by him for all believers. Every one has seen it ; I can answer, all confess it. They all ascribe salvation, not to their own efforts or exertions, but to Him who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. I will express this to you in the words of the wisest man who ever lived : “ Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding ; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths.” It is, then, a continual dependence upon the help of God, as promised for the sake of Christ, and conveyed by the influence of the Holy Spirit ; and not only a continual dependence upon it, but a constant expectation of it ; and not only a constant expectation of it, but an earnest and frequent entreaty for it. And here, to learn a lesson from our earthly parents, do you not in common things, when you are uncertain how to act, when you cannot determine for yourselves what is prudent or what is right, do you not go to the father for direction, and repair to the mother for advice ? Do you not, if you meet with unkindness or misconstruction, seek a refuge for your trouble in that true and fond bosom, which is never cold against the child of his love ? Do you not, when languor steals over you, or sickness seizes upon you, if the head swim with strange dizziness, and the limbs tremble beneath their load, if the flesh be torn, or the limbs be bruised, or the nerves



unstrung—do you not seek at once for relief and remedy at the mother's prompt and practised hand? Just so should God be a refuge and strength, a very present help in every trouble that presses on the soul, a guide in every uncertainty, a shield in every distress, a strength for every weakness, and a balm for every wound. Just so, if the ungodly would mislead you, or the unthinking would pervert you, or the spiteful would persecute you, or the unkind would wound you, or the injurious would wrong you, just so should you fly from them to God: and you have not far to fly; for he is ever near, ever ready to help: he sees you cannot help yourselves; and he will either temper trial, or nerve you to endure it, or strengthen you to overcome it. Remember what Christ has promised his people—"Lo I am with you always:" and if any do not feel he is with them, it is only because they are not sufficiently concerned to be one with him. The youngest and least accounted of in the spiritual church (of man I mean) is just as much a member of Christ, as the saint, full of years and ripe for glory. And as the hair cannot, of its own impulse, separate itself from the head, nor the branch detach itself from the vine, so neither can the life of the little ones who are indeed joined to Christ by faith, ever be separated from him.

Accustom yourselves, therefore—if indeed you have chosen the way of truth, and are determined to abide by the choice, which will surely lead you to life eternal in the end—accustom yourselves to expect, and to look for, and to realize, the constant presence of Christ. Remember that he is the way, as well as the truth and the life; and therefore he has said, "No man cometh to the Father but by me." Now if when first you feel the evil purpose gathering and rankling within, if when first you feel the unruly temper rising, or the forbidden desire kindling, or the allotted task and the required duty becoming more difficult and more irksome than it was wont, if you would go at once to a solitary place to seek Christ—or if that cannot be done, if you would lift up your hearts to him in the presence of the objects or the persons who are tempting you to do wrong, or restraining you from doing right—if you would but whisper (for effectual prayer is oftentimes a very short prayer) "Lord guide me, for I am now in danger of going astray; Lord strengthen me, for I am now sore oppressed with enemies; Lord now preserve the meanest of thy members; Lord now watch over the feeblest of thy sheep; Lord now lay thy judgments before my soul, and enable me to keep them, that I may not lose life eternal;"—then who can doubt, that He who is ever true to his promise, ever steadfast in his love, would be present by his Spirit at the voice of your cry; that he would cause you not to be overcome of evil, but enable you to overcome evil with good; that he would keep you firm in the way of truth which you have chosen, and in choosing which you have chosen Him who has brought life and immortality to light, and will share its glories through eternity with you.

Now I have addressed you thus far, my young friends, either as those who have chosen "the way of truth," or are willing and desirous to choose it. But there may, I am well aware, be some here present, who have not yet made up their minds; who see in the world so much of what is pleasing to attract them, so much of what is amusing to divert them, and so much of what is trifling to engage them, and so much (they will say) of what is necessary and useful, as regards the present life, to occupy them, that they have not yet made up their minds to



choose "the way of truth;" but if I were to ask them whether they have not yet made up their minds to choose the end of life and immortality, rather than destruction and despair, they would consider that the madness was mine instead of looking for it in themselves. "What," they would reply, if they thought it necessary to return any answer to such a question—"What, and is it possible that any one should not desire to obtain eternal happiness? Where can I seek an enduring home but in heaven? With whom can I wish to spend an endless eternity if not with God the Judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and angels and ministers of divine love, and the spirits of just men made perfect, who are yet more lovely, and yet more glorious, than they?" Thus answering, they shew that they have chosen the better part, if *the end* only were concerned; for it would be madness to choose otherwise. But then, we must say to them, that if they would attain the end of peace, they must choose "the way of truth;" and if they are still unsettled and undecided as to this only important point, O let them do as the Psalmist did, and lay before them the judgments of God. The threatenings of that righteous Judge, so threatening, so appalling, shall they not be executed? The promises of that gracious Father, so great and precious, shall they not be fulfilled? Where are we to seek his promises, but in the way of his commandments? And when are we to dread his threatenings, but when we are walking in our own way?—our own way, a way of lying through life—for it is full of false principles, and deceitful pleasures, and evil practices; a way of lying in death, if it hides from the unawakened eye the terrors of an angry God, of a slighted Saviour, of a resisted Spirit, of an impending and inevitable condemnation. O then, depart not from this sacred place without an earnest prayer, each of you, for himself or for herself—"Lord remove far from me the way of lying, and enable me to choose the way of truth." Let not the warning which you have this day received, add one to the list (already too long) of those which some of you, perhaps, though so young, have in time past heard in vain. Let not wisdom call whilst you refuse, and stretch out her hand while you pay no regard. Let not the Word of God speak to you in vain, when it speaks tenderly as to children. Let not Christ extend in vain the arms of his mercy, while you turn away coldly and carelessly from his embraces. "*Now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation." Let the spring-time of life be the seed-time of the soul. Now is the season to choose your way, as in so doing you would choose your end. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." While God reigns, and Christ lives, and the Spirit pleads with flesh, "the way of truth" shall ever terminate in the end of peace. "Who shall separate us from the love of God?" asks the Apostle; and who shall separate you if you begin now? Not life—for to live will be Christ; not death—for to die will be gain. While you live you will live unto the Lord, and when you die, you will die unto the Lord: so that whatever may be God's will concerning you in the year on which we now enter, living or dying you shall be the Lord's.

May God in his mercy enable you all, my dear young friends, to choose this day "the way of truth;" or, if you have already chosen it, may he confirm you in the choice, and convince you, like Mary, you have chosen "**the good part which shall never be taken from you.**"

But O, YE PARENTS AND HEADS OF FAMILIES, who are what are called Christians, O bethink you of your own solemn and weighty responsibility in regard to the dearest interests of your immortal charge, of whom you know well, that they can only obtain salvation by choosing "the way of truth;" but to whom you will be the most grievous offence, the most formidable and fatal impediment, if you have not chosen it for yourselves. How can any say without a pang of the heart, even without a blush of the cheek, "Come ye children hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord;" who show but too plainly by their conduct, that they have never learnt it for themselves. What is such practical inconsistency of the parent, but a millstone around the neck of the child, which may drag it down to the depths of destruction? How can any exhibit God as gracious, who have not tasted of his grace? How can any represent Christ as precious, who have not partaken of his love? How can any trace the work of the Spirit in the hearts of others who have never been conscious of it in their own? You know that the eye of the child turns instinctively to the parent as the visible representative of God; are you then careful to shadow forth the moral attributes of the divine nature—justice, and holiness, and mercy, and love, in your conduct towards those to whom in a certain sense, you are what Moses was to Aaron, in the place of God? O, my Christian friends, there are, we acknowledge, unnumbered and unmeasured motives in the excellency of the way itself—in the loveliness of Him who hath opened it for us, and preceded us in it—in the glories which are brightening at its close, to lead you to choose, and to choose unalterably, "the way of truth." You desire and love heaven, and therefore choose it: you desire to die hopefully, and therefore choose it. But though these be the strongest arguments—for nought can be given in exchange for the soul—we would entreat you on this special occasion, to choose it, not only for your own, but your children's sake. Shall they receive everything from you, except the one thing needful? Shall they learn everything from you, except the way of salvation? Shall they expect every enjoyment at your hand, but that which is the purest and the best? Will you leave them unprovided with the only wealth that is incorruptible, and the only treasure that shall abide? Shall the father and the mother forsake them in the path of life, and cast them out to perish in the wilderness of this world, except the Lord had taken them up? O that you may be concerned to spare yourselves and them the inexpressibly bitter pang which must ensue when those are separated at the gate of heaven who have been companions through the wilderness of life; and still more that pang—of which it were a mockery to make mention of the woe in terms which human language can employ—when *both*, consigned to the place of punishment, shall wish with unavailing anguish that they never had been born: but *they* will wish that they never had been born of *you*; and the terrors of hell, the weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, will be multiplied ten-fold by the bitter upbraidings—"It was thou my father, it was thou my mother, whose example and interest brought me to this: and now I am shut up for ever where the worm cannot die, and where the fire is not quenched."

O that the judgments of God, thus faithfully laid before you, might compel every one who now hears me, to choose for himself, or for herself, the 'way of truth.' And such would be the result if every parent, or head of a Christian

family, would depart hence with the solemn conviction, "And I, too, must be to my children in the place of God: I must represent Him to them, if I would prepare them for Him. My watchfulness, my tenderness, my solicitude, my self-denial, my travailing with them in birth again till Christ be formed in them, must be to them an emblem of the care with which Christ watches over them, and the tenderness with which Christ regards them, and the love which Christ displayed in the price at which he ransomed them, and of the holiness which Christ demands, and the service which he requires from them. I cannot lead them to the throne of grace, and remain myself afar off: I must go with them; if I would that they should go with me. I cannot plead with them to choose "the way of truth," till I have removed the way of lying from myself. If our counsel is to profit, we must take it together; and if we would be planted in the courts of our God, we must go to the house of God in company. There must be one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one fellowship of holiness, one brotherhood of love, the unity of the Spirit which is the bond of peace. Thus, and thus only, can I hope, that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, I shall inherit with them a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; and present myself before the judgment-seat, with the living evidences of duty performed, and of talents improved;—"Behold I, Lord, and the children whom thou hast given me."

And now, my dear young friends, before you quit this place, take with you a last lesson of solemn warning; one which shall appeal to your senses: may it find through them the avenue to the heart. You observe the symbols of mourning in which this pulpit is arrayed. They are placed there as a memorial of respect to one whom we have very lately attended to his last long resting-place; one who had attained man's utmost limit of four-score years, and who had walked for many of those years in "the way of truth." He was one of whom those who knew him best bare witness that he had kept innocence, and taken heed to the things that were right; though his own humility was continually deploring that he had not known God sooner, nor served Christ better. For he looked back, and (incredible as you may think it) four-score years to him was but as a dream; for he acknowledged in my hearing, that the words of the patriarch were but too fully his own: "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage;" evil, though not unprosperous; few, though verging on four-score. But now he hath passed away, and he is gone. He was worshipping among us on the last occasion of this special service; but he is now, we trust, adoring with the spirits of the just made perfect. His body is deposited in the dark and gloomy vault; but we doubt not his soul is with his God and his Saviour, in whose blood alone he trusted to cleanse him from all sin. May we thus die the death of the righteous, and may our last end be like his!

"But where," you will perhaps ask, "where is the especial lesson for us? He came to the grave full of years, as a shock of corn cometh in its season. His was no hand-breadth of life, swifter than a shuttle, and shorter than a span." No; but he is not the only one now in the sepulchre, who on this day last year, was, as you are, in the sanctuary. The scythe of the great reaper, Death, mows down the blade and the ear, as well as the full corn in the ear. There are others who have passed into the world of spirits, not only in the first

ripeness, not only in the full vigour of perfect age, but in the very flower and bloom of youth: one, in particular, who was only not a child, who sank into the grave the victim of a lingering disease; not unprepared—Christ had been formed in her heart; she had chosen the way of truth, and she found that it led her to the end of peace. And this is no single instance; nearly twenty deaths have occurred under my own immediate cognizance during the year that has passed: and again and again have I heard the departing accents testify to the excellence of this way of truth, rejoicing and glorying therein: and the hand of death was strong upon the frail body, and the foundations of the earthly tabernacle were shaken; but they felt that the rock was firm, and they testified that the house was sure. And it is alike with heartfelt regard to the mourners and hallowed remembrance of the dead, that I exhort you this day to follow them, considering the end of their conversation, Christ Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever—that I entreat you, as you would be partakers of the promises that they are now inheriting, to sanctify the commencement of this new year, by choosing, or confirming your choice of, “the way of truth.” And I would assure you, on the authority of God’s true and tried word, that thus alone can you expect to attain what you most desire—an end of peace.

I repeat then, for the third and last time, the words of the Lord Jesus, and may the finger of God write these upon your hearts, if all besides melt and fade away from your memories—“I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” Strive then to follow him as the way; seek to obey him as the truth: and it is not more certain that the brightest eye must darken, and the fairest form must fade, that earth shall return to earth, ashes to ashes, and dust to dust, than that so walking and so obeying, aided and supported by strength from above, you shall attain to, and enjoy Jesus for ever, as the life. When Christ, who is your life, shall appear in judgment, then shall you also, purified through his blood, appear with him in glory. God grant that such may be the end of all here present, through Jesus Christ!



## THE SUPREMACY OF THE CLAIMS OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH.

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REV. R. AINSLIE,

NEW COURT CHAPEL, CAREY STREET, JANUARY 4, 1835.

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“The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.”

PSALM cxix. 72.

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It is not easy to conceive of preference for religion being expressed in a plainer or more decided manner than in the text. It was the utterance of a heart familiar with piety, and well disciplined in self-denial. Such an acquiescence in the supremacy of the claims of religious truth, was not attained in a day; but was the result of a sound and matured experience in the ways of God, and of a knowledge of evil sufficiently extensive and painful, to enable the Psalmist to judge of the excellency of religion, and to delight in it above every earthly joy.

Every one present this evening, who has spent but a few hours in a calm and enlightened review of his life, his habits, his associations of thought and feeling, who has sat down to look into the interior of his mind, and to explore the secret chambers of imagery within, must have arrived at this conclusion—that there is a natural tendency in the mind to overlook and undervalue the influence of religious truth, and devotional feeling. It is palpably true in the history of the unconverted: and there is no one feature of character which brings the Christian to a throne of grace with deeper humiliation and sorrow, because it originates other transgressions, and leads to other backslidings, over which his heart mourns and is in bitterness. I ask you not at this moment to what other conclusions your self-examination has led you, but has it not led you to the one I have just named? Can you not fix upon periods even in the history of your youth, brief as it may be, when your mind was blank to all obligations to God and to Christ; and when error, folly, levity, and sin, had inscribed upon it their many claims to which you rendered a willing acquiescence and a cheerful obedience? And since that writing was blotted out, and the supremacy of those claims renounced—since the claims of religion have been impressed upon your heart by the Holy Spirit—have you not felt, and has not your soul been grieved at the influence of things seen and temporal, over the things which are unseen and eternal?

This tendency, brethren, may be diminished, or it may be greatly strengthened. In the present day, and especially in the history of young people, the multiplied and pressing duties and engagements of life, and the innumerable sources of pleasure and literary gratification opened to them, constitute a powerful



auxiliary to this already too powerful tendency to overlook, and incorrectly appreciate the value of religious truth. We shall spend this evening in an investigation of the different claims presenting themselves to our attention in the present day, and in shewing you the necessary and permanent superiority of the claims of religious truth over every other. I feel no difficulty in having to present you with a large amount of proof of the excellency and blessedness of religion; but I do feel a difficulty as to the manner in which such illustrations and proofs may be best laid before you. My sincere desire and humble prayer is, that God would make me this night the instrument of blessing to your souls. O, thou Holy and Eternal Spirit, open and prepare every heart to receive thine own word! Subdue and remove every rising feeling of opposition to the purity of thy truth. Convict the guilty; enlighten the ignorant; strengthen the helpless; establish the pious! May this service receive thy sanction and blessing: and may its results be apparent in the decision of those who have hitherto halted between two opinions; and in the more perfect surrender of the heart on the part of those who have professedly called themselves by thy name!

#### THE SUPREMACY OF THE CLAIMS OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH.

In the first place, we shall offer SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON RELIGIOUS TRUTH, embracing as it does not only doctrine for the illumination of the understanding, but precepts, principles, and motives, for the government and purity of the heart.

In looking at religious truth, one of its most prominent features is, *the necessity of the love of God which it enjoins upon all without distinction*. It is prominent in both Testaments and it is so important that it constitutes one of the two great commandments, on which hang all the law and the prophets. The Psalmist referred to it when he said, "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver:" for he knew that the commandment proceeded from the lips of Jehovah, and that he wrote it on the tables of stone which he delivered to the custody of the prophet and legislator of Israel.

God has given to you and to me a rational and an immortal existence. It is not of the nature of an angel, nor of a brute; but it is of the nature of man. He has prescribed and revealed the laws of this existence, and he has constituted us intelligent enough to understand those laws, and accountable enough to obey them, and to receive the reward of obedience, or, if we disobey them, to receive the reward of our disobedience. And who can say that in this, God has acted unwisely, unkindly, or unrighteously? Has not he who has given us existence, the sole right to regulate it by the laws of his government? Should not he direct and command those intelligent minds with which he has both endowed and dignified us? God has created us with capacities for the enjoyment of pure and elevated happiness; and is it not reasonable that his directions, both as to its sources and the means of attaining it, are worthy of our enlightened attention and implicit confidence? Let it be the settled conviction of our minds, not only that in God we live, move, and have our being, but that he, as our Creator, has an absolute dominion over us for life or death; for blessing or for punishment.

Admitting this fact, even in connexion with the fact of our guilt and sinfulness, we have no ground for despondency or despair. The character and perfections of God whom we are commanded to love, are calculated to inspire us with hope and to disperse our fears: and although in our guilty and unconverted state we have neither inclination nor ability to love God, yet in the exercise of his free and sovereign mercy, while he reveals himself to us in the person of his Son, he also sheds abroad his love in our hearts, and then we love him, and through his grace the holy fire he has kindled within us continues to burn; and although apparently quenched by death, it burns with a purer and intenser flame when the soul is admitted to the immediate presence of the Deity. Is there, then, nothing in the love of God to awaken an interest in your breasts and to diffuse delight in your souls? Is he not your Creator and your God? Is he not your Almighty benefactor? Is not the relation you sustain of the most tender and endearing character? Is he not your Father who is in heaven? Has he not compassionated you in your guilty, helpless, and forlorn state: pitied you when plunged in darkness and in despair, and expressed his pity and tender love in giving his Son to bear your iniquities in his own body upon the cross? His character and perfections, as revealed in the Bible; his wisdom and providence, as exhibited in his works and in the government of the world; his grace and love, as displayed in the redemption of fallen man; and his glory and majesty, as our final Judge; all combine to excite and fix our attention upon God as the Being whom we should love, whose laws we should obey, whose service we should enter, and whose purposes of mercy we should endeavour to fulfil, so far as our feeble agency can be contributory to their accomplishment. Other objects of our love fade, decay, and recede from our sight. The memory of their virtues may be embalmed with our purest associations, and as Christians we may be looking forward to that re-union and eternal felicity in heaven which is the sole privilege of the pious. But God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever: His claims take the precedence of every other. He who has redeemed us, has appointed father and mother, sister and brother, houses and lands, a lower place in our affections than that which he must occupy. And he has a right to do so. He created us: He made us men and not brutes; and in one moment he could reduce us to the folly and helplessness of idiocy; lay the proud structure of human reason in ruins; and could lay the glory of the human intellect, and the glory of erudition, alike prostrate in the dust. This, brethren, is one of the facts of religious truth; we have not learnt it from nature; human wisdom has not explored and discovered it; philosophy has not suggested it; but God himself, when he descended in the awful and overwhelming glory of Sinai, amidst thunder and lightning, he revealed it.

A second great truth revealed in the Bible, and demanding our firm and enlightened belief, is *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*. The Bible embraces, as you are aware, a large mass of historical, chronological, ecclesiastical, and general truths. It contains, except for a short interval, the history of the divine procedure with mankind, and especially with the church, for a period of about 4000 years. But there are some facts on which the excellency and the blessedness of the book entirely depend; and one of these is, that it reveals in a

most circumstantial and impressive manner all that relates to the purposes of God connected with our redemption. Our apostasy, with its causes, influence, and consequences, are therein narrated. The mission of a Saviour (Jesus Christ) his doctrines, his miracles, his precepts, his prayers, the proofs of his deity and glory, of his humiliation and suffering, and finally the narratives of his death and resurrection, are there recorded. There is a peculiar importance attached to his death, and the inspired apostles are unanimous in ascribing *salvation* to the death of Christ. The circumstances of our guilt rendered it necessary that a sacrifice should be offered: Jesus Christ offered himself "as a Lamb without blemish and without spot," and *he was sacrificed*: the thick and lofty veil of the temple was rent in twain when he died; many of the dead rose from their graves; there was a great earthquake; and darkness covered the land for about three hours. This, dear brethren, is the appointed way of our reconciliation, justification, and return to God. It is the theme of our ministry; it is the subject on which the Bible dilates at great length; and this is the Gospel, the glad tidings of a Saviour published to our world. The love of Christ is enjoined upon us, and the most fearful denunciations are recorded against those who do not love him. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." Without faith in Christ it is impossible either to please God or to be saved. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

The third and last fact to which we now call your attention, is *that of personal holiness*. The illumination of the mind, and its recovery from spiritual death, is effected by the agency of the Holy Spirit. The children of God are born again by the agency of the Spirit; they are sanctified by the same Spirit; the fruits of their regeneration and sanctification are exhibited (at least they should be exhibited) in the whole tenor of their conduct; in the purity of the imagination; in spiritual and devotional feeling; in godly conversation; in the denial of all ungodliness and worldly lusts; and in living soberly, righteously, and godly in the present evil world. It constitutes the most powerful evidence of a state of genuine discipleship, and, as it is the work of the Spirit, it places us in the most favourable condition for the love of God and for obedience to his commandments. It has been proved in millions of cases to be the source of the purest, most elevated, and abiding happiness, and is the essential fitness we require for heaven. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

This is a very brief reference to religious truth, but it embraces the leading facts of the New Testament. They might be greatly amplified; the connexion of many other truths in the New Testament, with those I have named, is most intimate, but the whole of them involve the *entire surrender of the heart to God*.

Secondly, Let us now see **WHAT ARE THOSE OBJECTS WHOSE CLAIMS COMPETE WITH THOSE OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH**, and the entire surrender of the heart to God.

The first I advert to is *the ordinary mercantile duties of life*. The constitution of society, the methods of transacting business, the very nature of business, and the habits of the merchant and the professional man, are greatly, if not

altogether changed, to what they were in the olden time, which some I am now addressing well remember. Business at that time was conducted with an ease and comfort of which comparatively the men of the present day know but little. A good remunerating profit, a good business connexion, a considerable leisure, were well understood; and they conducted the honest and industrious citizen to circumstances of affluence, and to an old age of ease and of comfort. But now the face of things is changed. I notice this only in reference to the *moral influence* the present state of things is calculated to exert. With many it is absolutely necessary to be engaged in the business of the world from an early hour to a very late one: and the claims of the world are felt to intrench upon those higher and better loved claims presented in the Bible. The six days of the week are days of toil, of preparation for the sustenance of the body, and the maintenance of a family: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. On this day it is your duty and your privilege to be free from the world, to lay aside its claims, to disburden your mind of its cares, to be grateful for your prosperity, and to enter into God's house to acknowledge and obey the claims of God and of true religion.

These claims of business are righteous, and must be attended to; whatever may be the arrangements of providence in your individual case, so far as you can ascertain those arrangements you are bound to fulfil them. To "be diligent in business," is an inspired commandment, which it would be alike disreputable and sinful to break. While we therefore allow the business of the world to have great and important claims, they must be daily subordinated to the love of God, faith in Christ, and the cultivation of personal holiness. Some men (and it is a snare artfully set by the enemy of our souls for young people) allow the claims of the world to have a willing ascendancy over their minds. They are absorbed with them, and they neglect religion. *Young men*, you who have recently entered upon the business of life, you who are contemplating it, let me beseech you to keep the claims of the world in their proper place. They have no right to intrude upon your Sabbaths. Your counting-house is not the place you should be found in on the Sabbath; and the posting of your books is not the employment God approves for that holy day. It is not the method by which you will attain to peace of mind, nor to prosperity. Whatever involves the breaking of God's commandments (excepting works of necessity and mercy) is sinful; no blessing can be prayed for upon such engagements, and no blessing will be granted.

There are also claims originating in what is more strictly termed professional duties and studies; and inasmuch as these are associated with a different cultivation of the intellect, present their peculiar temptations to those who pursue them. The aspiring youth, devoted to the study of the law, or of medicine, or to the pursuits of general literature, is often exposed to the most serious and fatal temptations. In many cases destitute of a religious education, uninstructed in the truths and authority of the Bible, unacquainted with the corruption and deceitfulness of his own heart, and feeling as he rises into life an expansion of mind, and being familiar with the elements of knowledge, how often does he come into contact with men who take advantage of his susceptibility of impression; discourse to him upon the dignity of reason, the pleasures of the world, the gratifications of sense; and, if anything like religious feeling or



impression stand in the way, immediately denounce it as the barrier to happiness, because they find it to be the barrier to the commission of sin. The duties of professional men are important and highly responsible. Many of them afford pleasure ; many of them are exceedingly irksome. Their studies also, according to the nature of their profession, and the desire they have for improvement and advancement, are varied ; either profound or superficial, fascinating or wearying, favourable or unfavourable to religious impression, and to a religious life.

To every young man engaged in professional life, I would say, give to your duties and studies the most enlarged and persevering attention. If devoted to general literature, I offer you the same advice. There is no success to be attained in the present day, no sterling professional eminence to be acquired, but as the result of enlightened and habitual perseverance. Mental power, however splendid and versatile, cannot be a permanent substitute for the fruits of laborious diligence. If engaged in the profession of the law, labour to be familiar with all the standard works that bear upon that branch of the profession to which your attention is, from choice or necessity, directed. If engaged in the study of medicine, the same advice is applicable to you, especially in connexion with that *practical knowledge* of the human frame, and the diseases to which we are liable, without which the most elaborate theoretical knowledge will be but of little avail. But while I am offering this advice, am I intruding upon the homage you owe to religion, and the obedience you owe to the claims of God? I feel that I am not. There is nothing in religion which forbids, discountenances, or is incompatible with the highest cultivation of the mind, and the loftiest reputation consequent upon professional industry, skill, and perseverance. I give the fullest weight to all the arguments that can be urged by the tradesman and by the professional man, as to the importance of their pursuits, the necessity and propriety of them as the means of subsistence, and as leading to a righteous provision for a family, as the groundwork of respectability and eminence, and as conducting to stations of civil honour and usefulness in society. When I do this, I ask, what more can be required of me? Shall the most passionate lover of literature and science ask me to give a lower place to the claims of religion than of science? I cannot do it. Reason and Revelation alike forbid it. All studies and pursuits, merely secular, cease with this life. Religion only commences here ; it is matured and glorified in eternity. The interests of eternity I feel should take the precedence and supremacy of the interests of time. The word of God declares that they should do so. The history of mankind illustrates and confirms it beyond dispute. I know that there is a powerful competition betwixt the claims I have referred to ; and, in many cases, there may be an occasional ascendancy over the claims of religion. But there is an essential difference betwixt a willing and delighted ascendancy, and one which causes the pious man to lament and mourn that his mind has, through some strong necessity, been overborne by worldly and professional anxieties and cares. *Young men!* make it a matter of daily watchfulness and prayer, that the claims of God and of true religion, be not intruded upon. Give to God your whole heart. Love him with a renewed and sanctified mind. Make it a matter of conscience to devote a portion of every day to the devout perusal of the Scriptures, and to sincere, fervent prayer to your heavenly



Father. Hold much fellowship with Jesus Christ. Study to realize that-elevation of spiritual feeling, that purity of thought, that devotional temper of mind, which will, under God make all inferior acquisitions contributory to your growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But a more powerful source of opposition to the claims of God originates in *the pleasures and amusements of the world*. The intellect is not so commonly assailed as the heart. The passions and lusts of a depraved heart are courted and fed by the pleasures of society, by the pursuits of the worldly, and the gratifications of the sensual. The world, and the things of the world, are opposed to God, and to the things of God. Men are tempted to seek their happiness in worldly society, in fashionable amusements, in the gratification of their senses; and when these are followed there is a distaste immediately awakened for true religion. There is a great diversity in the pleasures of the world, and in its fascinations. The plea generally is, on the part of a young man, that he intends to conform very slightly, and to keep himself within certain prescribed limits, both as to expenditure and pleasure. But who has ever done it? Who has ever successfully united a conformity to the world with true spirituality of mind; and who has ever been able, when once he has entered within the circle of worldly influence, to preserve himself from sin, but by a timely retreat? It is impossible to associate with persons whose conversation is light, trifling, lewd, or profane—it is impossible to have the eye assailed with objects that excite lust, the ear to listen to the profane jests, to the profligate and profane representations and language of our popular plays, to be addicted to fashionable amusements, to cross the threshold of a gambling house, to exceed the bounds of moderation in eating and drinking, without contracting guilt in the eyes of our Maker. “Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

Let me ask whether any of these things can contribute to your humility, spirituality, self-denial, faith in Christ, love of God, and preparation for heaven? The claims of trade, of professional duties and studies, we allow to be great, and we honour them. And the claims of domestic society, of friendly, and Christian, and literary intercourse, we allow to be great, and we honour them. But conformity to the pleasures and vanities of the world has no claims. You cannot plead for them. There are positive evils associated with them; a waste and loss of time; family disarrangements; bad company; bad passions; and a deliberate exposure of the mind to contamination and evil.

I have thus briefly adverted to what I conceive put forth claims in opposition to God and to true religion, and with which it is possible for the heart to be engrossed in the place of God and divine things. I shall now advert, for a few moments, to SOME OF THE MANY PROOFS OF THE SUPERIORITY OF THE CLAIMS OF TRUE RELIGION. “The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.

There are two series of observations, the outline of which only we can lay before you, establishing the supremacy of the claims of Religion.

In the first place, it might be proved from the fact that *God is the Author of the claims urged upon us in the Bible*.

"My Son, give me thine heart." "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." "Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with thy God." God advances these claims to the children of men as the Author of their existence, their Lord, their Redeemer, and their Judge. *His* is the highest authority in the universe, and we ought to obey God rather than man. His claims cannot be neglected or despised without incurring his severe displeasure, and no earthly pretext can justify us in offering the homage of the heart to another God.

Secondly, The supremacy of the claims of religion may be argued from *the nature of religious truth as affecting man in his present state, and in the most important relations he can sustain to this and a future life.*

In this world he has to perform the part of an intelligent and responsible being; to fill up his relations in society, in the family, and in the Church, as one who must give an account to God. Religion is revealed as the means of his recovery from his naturally depraved state, and as the source of light, of truth, of holiness, and of consolation, during his present pilgrimage state.

Thirdly, *The truths of religion, the way of reconciliation and forgiveness, and all the blessed prospects of a future and happy state, are not discoverable by the light of reason, nor by the indefatigable industry and the most painful researches of the human mind.*

It cannot be told by unaided reason whether there is one God, one hundred, or one thousand. It cannot be told how sin entered the world; whether it can be pardoned, whether God will be merciful to poor and wretched sinners, and whether man is to lie down in the dust to perish like the brute, or to rise to a new and immortal life. So plain however are all things in the Bible necessary to life, godliness, and immortality, that a wayfaring man though a fool cannot err. On all these most interesting subjects you have the fullest information in the pages of the inspired volume.

Fourthly, Their supremacy may be argued from *what is involved in their reception and rejection.*

Here they occupy the loftiest eminence. You may be a good or a bad tradesman (I do not mean a dishonest one) you may be a sound or a superficial lawyer, a skilful or unskilful surgeon, a profound or shallow metaphysician, a professed or amateur geologist, a plodding natural philosopher, or devoted to science merely for amusement—and none of these will affect your eternal destiny. But if you are not decidedly religious, born again of the Spirit of God, if you have not faith in Christ, if you are not spiritually minded, you will be eternally lost. Over the portals of heaven, in letters of fire, and legible even on earth, are these words, "Nothing that is defiled, or that worketh an abomination, can enter here."

There is a second series of observations, establishing the same point.

First: *To every thing that is commendable in the claims of the present life religion gives its sanction and imprimatur.* Every thing taught by the enlightened moralist, derives its highest authority from the Bible, whether he acknowledges or denies the inspiration of that blessed Book. Every thing which can conspire to make a good and honourable citizen—industry, prudence, frugality, and integrity—are inculcated here. Every thing to form the character, and guide the conduct, of a husband or wife, child or parent, is inculcated here. Every thing to make

men enlightened and loyal subjects of civil and political society, has its highest authority in the Bible. It forbids and denounces *ungodliness* and *sin*, in all their horrid, disgusting, or more fascinating forms. To whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, religion gives its full and hearty sanction.

Secondly : *Religious truth will give a tone and direction to the mind in the acquisition of other classes of truth, and will make their acquisition easier and more profitable.* A religious state of mind, ready to bow to the authority of Revelation, is better prepared for the acquisition of general truth. God is supplicated for assistance, and his blessing is devoutly desired in all the engagements of life, by those who love him.

Thirdly : *All other truth is confessedly limited in its interest and influence to time ; but religious truth, while it is the greatest blessing and ornament of our present existence, is peculiarly intended to prepare us for the future.* There cannot be a fitter and more appropriate illustration of this, than the scene of a death-bed. What is most befitting a death-bed ? and from this we may judge what is most befitting that world into which death introduces us—What is it ? Merchandize ? No ! Literature ? No ! Philosophy ? No ! Sensuality ? No ! Ungodly companions ? No ! Vain and foolish conversation and jesting ? No, it is not “ *convenient* ! ”—Then what is it ? It is religion, pious conversation, prayer, and the presence of God. Both young and aged Christians have found it so ; and their happiness in death, and their triumph over death, have alike attested the divinity of religion.

I have thus in a brief and very imperfect manner endeavoured to prove to you the Supremacy of the Claims of Religious Truth. Before I conclude, I must address the different classes of young persons present this evening.

The first class consists of *those who have been well initiated in religious truth, but who have not yet decided for God*, and are unable to say, “ The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.” I do not say that the labour that has been bestowed upon you has been bestowed in vain, but the desired and pleasant fruits have not yet been gathered by a parent’s or a teacher’s hand. The scene of education you well remember. The object of a father’s care, and of a mother’s deep anxiety and earnest prayer, or the object of some pious teacher’s charge, you look back upon the time when you were first taught to lisp the name of Jesus ; and some of you can trace your education from that period to the present. How often have you sung the praises of Jesus ; how often have you united in prayer ; how often have you pondered over the sacred page, and listened to the instructive and impressive commentaries upon it by those who have wished well to your eternal interests. Your advantages have been very great, and your privileges cannot be numbered. You are intimately acquainted with the powerful and blessed influence of religion upon others. You may have known some who were insincere, and who dishonoured the profession which they made, under the influence of improper and worldly motives ; but *you know*, and *you have seen* its blessed influence upon others. You are convinced of the reality of religion, and you have seen its effects in changing the heart and conduct, in strengthening the mind, and in consoling and supporting it on the bed of death. Why then

have you not decided for God? Have you any reason? What is it? Is it that you are young, and you will put it off for the present? You may die this year. Should it be so, what will be your eternal state? Or is it the world? Is it pleasure? Is it lust? Is it evil companionship? Or is it mere thoughtlessness and unconcern, that has prevented your decision? *My young friend!* whatever it may be, put it beneath your feet. Let no barrier stand betwixt you and God. You will be happy if you are pious. Happy amidst the troubles of life that you have a God to go to who will support you under them, and deliver you and watch over you as your Heavenly Father. You will be *free*; yes, *FREE* from those pangs of conscience, those TERRIBLE ANXIETIES that disturb the peace of those who are not decided for God.

But, some of you may be saying, "I acknowledge the supremacy of the claims of religious truth: I believe the Bible; I see the impress of its divinity on every page; I admit its holy influence upon those who love God: I have seen that true religion is the basis of all true virtue; that it is the bond of domestic virtue, happiness, and prosperity; and that nothing can compensate for it in affliction and death. But still I feel that present things charm me more, and have a stronger hold upon my heart: I am living for those around me, my father or my mother, my husband or my wife, my child or my home. I should like to be religious, I wish to be, but I am not." Then why is it? The fact is, you have never been in earnest upon the subject. Have you ever gone to the throne of God in prayer, confessed your love of present things, and prayed for the Holy Spirit to subdue it, to regenerate your heart and make you decided for God, for truth, for spirituality, and holiness; and if you have, have you continued to persevere as one who was in earnest? I should as soon expect at this hour of the evening, to see the beams of the meridian sun illumine the place in which we are assembled, as to hear that God had denied your request. No, he will not deny it. May I not, O God, with reverence, tell such a person at this moment, and in thy name, that thou canst not deny such a request? Hast thou not said, "Ask, and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened?" "If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Blessed Saviour, we believe thy words. Apply them to the hearts of the undecided, that they may come to thee with sincerity and true repentance, and obtain the blessing.

There is a second class: *those who at one time gave pleasing indications of a religious state*: who probably went so far as to make a profession of religion, but who have declined from the ways of God, and have gone back into the world. In what terms shall I address you? In anger? No, I cannot: your state excites no anger, it excites the deepest pity. You did put your hand to the plough, but you have gone back. You professed to have tasted of the powers of the world to come, but you have put them away from you: and you are now feeding upon husks, in a world from whose influence, at one time, you hoped you had escaped. How dreadful is your state! Every pious soul in this place pities you, and prays for you. Angels mourn over you: the Son of God weeps over



you, and you have grieved the Holy Spirit of God. Who can rejoice over your state? The devils? Yes, they may. Can wicked men? No, they have remorse and conscience enough not to rejoice over you. They may have gratified a malicious pleasure in making you bad like themselves, but they cannot wish your *damnation*. How long will you remain in this state of backsliding? The whole of this year? No; let the first Sabbath of it determine your abandonment of your present course. You have felt that the way of transgressors is hard. You may have been tempted to go great lengths in sin; tempted to deny the truth of the Bible; to blaspheme the name of Christ; to desecrate the Sabbath: but have you sunk so low as to do it without remorse? I cannot believe it. Is the way of recovery open? Yes; broad as the expanse of heaven; and God is saying to you, "Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity: that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord."

There may be some young persons present this evening *avowedly irreligious*: some probably who are infected with scepticism and infidelity. You may have been trained up in this state, or you may have been led into it since you have arrived at the period of youth. Are you happy? Perfectly happy? I hear the response of such a mind: "*I am not happy*: I have no foundation for happiness: I have been trying to lay a foundation in the rejection of the Bible; in gratifying the propensities of my nature; in seeking to be free from the shackles of religion; in escaping from the influence of religious persons; in refusing to look into religious books; and in studying infidel publications: but I am not happy. I have walked in the counsel of the ungodly; I have stood in the way of sinners; I have sat in the seat of the scornful: but I am not happy. I have laughed at the pious; I have ridiculed their foibles; I have made a jest of their sanctity: but I am not happy. I have neglected prayer; I have forsaken the house of God; and I have come here to-night only out of curiosity, to hear what the preacher could say to a young man *who is not happy*." Gladly would I reply to you for an hour. Come to me, unhappy young man, at any hour in private, and we will go into the details of your case. But in your present state you cannot be happy. You may be reduced by terrible lengths of profligacy and infidelity to a state of brutish insensibility; but not elevated to happiness. "There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked." "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil." "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." "To be carnally minded is death." "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die." The whole Bible must be proved to be false, before a wicked man can be the subject of enlightened and permanent happiness. Is there then no hope for you? *There is*: "Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray God: peradventure the thoughts of thine heart shall be forgiven thee." "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." Enter upon the paths of repentance and obedience. Hasten to the cross: there plead, "Lord, remember me;" and *this night* you will be forgiven. Enter the paths of pure religion, and you will find that they are ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace. You will then, when



you have felt the blessedness of the Gospel, say, "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

But I am addressing many young persons this evening, who are *truly pious*; who not only appreciate religion, but who love it, and are daily bringing forth the fruits of righteousness and true holiness. You have been brought under the influence of religion by the grace of the Holy Spirit. God has revealed his Son in you the hope of glory. He has delivered you out of the power of darkness, and translated you into the kingdom of his dear Son. I need not pronounce any eulogy upon your state. Your experience has proved to you that a state of reconciliation, forgiveness, justification, and adoption into the family of God, is a state of enlarged and solid happiness. Never fail to acknowledge the great source of your happiness—the grace of God. Never confide in any earthly resources for the maintenance of spirituality, but in the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. Enter upon no compromise with the world, nor with sin. If you do, from that moment the world will gain an advantage over you, and your happiness sustain the shock of a moral earthquake. "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation." Cultivate a spirit of seriousness, watchfulness, and prayer. Enter upon a more thorough and prayerful study of the Scriptures. Seek to be more deeply impressed with the fact, that the increase of spirituality and the conformity of your hearts to the image of Christ, approximate you to the character of God, and to a fitness for heaven. Cultivate the love of Christ by an habitual study of his character, doctrines, and precepts. Let his love to you be correctly appreciated, and then yours will rise like the waters of a fountain, rising up to eternal life. Flee youthful lusts. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." You have put on the armour, but the days of conflict are before you; be not therefore as those who are putting it off. See that you are well and fully employed. O, how much is to be done for yourself and for others! And while you look to your own soul, will you not care for others? Will you not assist in dispersing ignorance—in circulating religious knowledge—in ameliorating suffering, relieving poverty—in distributing the Scriptures, and in telling others of the salvation you have found? I believe you will. A new period of labour has opened upon us. What shall be its character? What shall be our doings? What shall be our history? Who can take the book, and unloose the seal, and read to us the history of the present year as to ourselves, our country, or the Church of the living God. It may be prosperous, or it may be adverse. It may be marked by no signal changes in the face of society; it may be a year of confusion, of political and ecclesiastical turmoil. Dear brethren, whatever may be its character—whatever may be the progressive developments as to political society—let us be in earnest about our religious state, our growth in grace, our preparation for heaven, and the increase and true prosperity of the Church of the living God. By and bye and we shall be, in relation to all the civil, political, and literary changes of the present scene, as though we had never lived. But to our religious state we shall never be dead: if it be neglected here, if despised here, we shall be alive to the insufferable and eternal punishment consequent upon our guilty state. But if it be begun here and perpetuated in heaven, we shall, in eternity, be alive to its blessedness and glory. The rest that remaineth for the people of God, the

inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, *that* will prove to us how true were the deep convictions of our present state, that "the law of thy mouth, O God, is better to us than thousands of gold and silver." The motto of the Israelites, when redeemed by the strong arm of God, was, "Onward to Canaan." Let ours, as redeemed sinners, be "Onward to heaven." Then shall we be embraced in that goodly number, who as the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joys upon their heads. Yes, we shall obtain joy and gladness : and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

## THE ORIGIN AND CLAIMS OF INDEPENDENCY.

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REV. J. BURNET.

SILVER STREET CHAPEL, JANUARY 8, 1835\*.

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"Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."—ACTS, ix. 31.

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I HAVE selected these words, my friends, as the subject of the remarks that I intend to submit to you, because they bring before us a succinct, but at the same time a very striking and interesting description of the early churches of Christ, in that part of the world where the Gospel was at first diffused, and where the churches were at first formed. If this be a picture of the Church of Christ in Judea and in Samaria, after they had been formed by the inspiration of infallible wisdom—if this be a real picture of the interesting community, that first became the depositories of that truth which brought "peace on earth," and "glory to God in the highest"—does it not then become an interesting question, in what way we are to enjoy the same privileges which they appear to have enjoyed; in what way we are to imbibe the spirit by which they appear to have been actuated; in what way we are, like them, to be "edified," and to "walk in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," and, like them, thus to multiply our numbers by the diffusion of our principles; in what way we are, like them, to stand out thus distinctly from everything earthly, and be influenced by feelings that belong only to heaven, and originate only with the Spirit of the living God; in what way, in short, we are, like them, to become a fellowship separated from the earth, and growing in meetness for the community of heaven; while we exhibit here the germ of those feelings and of those affections, that are to be fully developed in our Father's kingdom?

In conducting such an inquiry as this, it is quite obvious, that, in order to be like them, we must ascertain the circumstances in which they were placed, and the authority by which they were constituted and governed. And, unless we can find elsewhere a different authority from that to which they yielded obedience, to which we are commanded to do homage; and unless we can find elsewhere a different church constitution and administration, from that which these churches possessed; we are then, as it appears to me, bound, in order to participate in their spiritual joys, to follow up the obedience which they yielded to the authority by which they were constituted and governed, and to adopt, in the outline, the principles by which these churches were ruled.

Now the subject to which I propose to direct your attention to-day, has been

\* At the Monthly Meeting of the Congregational Ministers of London.

stated to be, "THE ORIGIN AND CLAIMS OF INDEPENDENCY:" and from this mode of stating the subject to be considered, you will perceive, at once, that INDEPENDENCY is selected as the supposed character of the system upon which these churches were formed, as the system by which they were ruled, and as the system in obedience to which they received and participated so much spiritual fellowship and enjoyment. It may be said, "This then is prejudging the question." Had no judgment been previously formed on the question, I should not have presumed to direct your attention to it. I propose, therefore, not to lead you into an inquiry, without knowing at its commencement what judgment I have formed concerning it; but I propose to lead you into the inquiry which I have conducted myself, and which has led to the conclusion which I have adopted, and which is embodied in the manner in which the subject has been announced to you, namely, "The Origin and Claims of Independency."

In looking, therefore, at the passage before us, as the motto of the remarks that I have thus to submit to you—and in regarding the remarks I have to submit, as carrying with them, what appears to me satisfactory evidence, that these churches, thus edified, thus walking in the fear of God and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were Independent churches, *all* Independent churches, and *nothing but* Independent churches—I shall endeavour, in the first place, to direct your attention to the first part of the subject, namely, the origin of Independency; and, secondly, to the claims of that system upon our obedience and affection.

In the first place, then, let me direct your attention to THE ORIGIN OF INDEPENDENCY.

I am quite aware, that many would find the origin of Independency in a recent period of the history of our own country: I am quite aware that the apostolical ages would be passed by in perfect silence upon the subject: I am quite aware that the early circumstances of the Church, before the days of Constantine, would be passed by in silence upon the subject: I am quite aware that the lengthened dominion of popery would be passed by as making no statements on the subject: and I am equally aware, that from the Reformation, a considerable progress would be made into the ages that follow, before it would be admitted that Independency had been detected in its origin. But whilst I am aware that all this is the fact, and whilst I do not intend to begin the inquiry which I mean to conduct with the origin of Independency in this country, but rather with the origin of Independency in the very first creation of the system, I go away from its introduction into this or any other country, and go to its first promulgation, as I think I find it promulgated, in the Gospel itself.

Now, in conducting such an inquiry, the first thing that would very naturally occur to the inquirer—as the question is about churches and church government—the first thing that would occur would be, What are we to understand by this term, "CHURCHES?" Let it not be supposed that the term is distinctly understood because it is commonly used. The terms that are used most commonly amongst us, are, generally, the terms that are least understood—the terms to which we attach the least definite meaning—the terms that are most likely to be abused—the terms that carry weight and power with them, because they are terms of daily occurrence; but terms that carry, at the same time,

danger with them, because, in consequence of their perpetual occurrence, they are not thoroughly examined.

Now, if I were to ask, in what sense the term "church" is employed in the Word of God, I should certainly be likely to ascertain its legitimate meaning. It would be unnecessary to occupy your time in shewing you how it is employed by mankind generally: this would introduce a great variety of definitions, and shades of sentiment upon the question, which would occupy our time, without leading to any satisfactory conclusion. It is a matter of no moment how the term may be used among the children of men; but it is a matter of very great moment in a question of evidence, how it is used in the Word of God.

I do not propose to direct your attention to every passage in which this, and other terms to which we are accustomed to refer, may be employed. I intend simply to direct your attention to a few passages on each subject, as a specimen of the passages that might be adduced upon the same subject from other quarters, were we not limited in time, and the brevity of a single discourse, which, you will perceive at once, would render such an application of all the passages that it would be desirable to refer to, utterly impossible.

The first meaning, then, to which I would direct your attention, of the word "church," is that of *an assembly*. The word signifies "a congregation," or "an assembly." In Acts xix, you will find it employed in this sense. You will find a multitude collected together at the time that the Apostle was preaching at Ephesus, and you will find that that multitude, when an outcry had been raised on behalf of the worship of the goddess Diana, rushed into the theatre, the place of the ordinary assembly for judicial matters; and hence it was their intention, that a public inquiry should be instituted into the doctrine thus brought to Ephesus by the Apostle and by his friends, and promulgated there—and that judgment should be given concerning it; so that the great goddess Diana should not be offended. The town-clerk of Ephesus, the acting authority on such an occasion, restrains the people who had assembled from committing any violence, by the advice which he tendered to them. When the assembly came together, the outcry having been raised, and collected in the place where judgment was to be given, and whence it was to be decreed, the town-clerk of Ephesus, as we find at the close of the chapter, interferes, and reasons with them; and, after reasoning with them, he tells them, in the thirty-ninth verse, "If ye inquire anything concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. For," says he, "we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse. And when he had thus spoken he dismissed *the assembly*;" or, in other words, "the congregation." The same term is that which is rendered in so many places "the Church." Now, if we regard the multitude that assembled together in the theatre, we shall find that they were nothing more than *a congregation* of people; and under these circumstances they give us the first idea that we may entertain of the term usually rendered "Church" in the New Testament. Therefore it signifies a congregation.

And were we to go to the *etymology* of the term, it signified a "congregation called out by authority." It would not militate against this view of the expression to reply, that this passage seems to employ the term, to designate an



uproarious multitude; because they assembled in the place where justice used to be administered, and for the purpose, as they supposed, of also administering it. The agent of the executive government, also, is found interposing to prevent the people from imagining, that this is what they usually designate a lawfully convoked assembly. And, consequently, the word is left with its proper and legitimate meaning, to designate an assembly called out, or under authority, an assembly acknowledged by the laws of the land.

If this, then, be the meaning of the expression, let us look at its application. And hence another view I shall take of the term will be found in the epistle to the Ephesians, iii. 21. We find the term signifying, *the great body of Christians*; including all, excluding no one. In the twenty-first verse we have this doxology: "Unto him be glory in *the Church* by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Now, in this passage, it is quite obvious, that the term "Church" signified the whole of the spiritual members of the body of Christ. On this I do not dwell, as the case is clear. In 1 Corinthians, xii. 28, we find the term employed in precisely the same way: "God hath set some in *the Church*, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers; after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." All these are said to have been set by God in *the Church*. Now the meaning of that obviously is, that all these spiritually-gifted men were set in the whole body of the church, and scattered through it amongst all its members, for the purpose of diffusing the knowledge of the Redeemer's name. They belonged to no one particular church; they belonged to no one class of the great community; but were considered as the great moving instruments by which the power of God was applied to the whole. Here again, then, the expression "Church" signifies the great body of Christians.

If we look for another application of it, (as I have stated, I do not give you all the passages in which the term may occur in the sense which I intend; they would be too numerous; you can refer to them at your leisure.) if we take another application of it, we find that it applies to *single congregations of Christians*. Hence if we look at Romans, xvi. 5, we shall find it applied in this sense: "Likewise," says the Apostle, "greet *the church* that is in their house;" that is, in the house, as you will find in the third verse, of Priscilla and Aquila, who were his "helpers in Christ Jesus." Now, here it is obvious, that one particular fellowship, meeting in the house of Priscilla and Aquila, is designated a "church;" and, consequently, no doubt will be entertained, that in this passage it applies to a single church, a single congregation. In 1 Corinthians, xiv. 23, we find the Apostle reasoning thus: "If, therefore, the whole *church* be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" Now, here the church is said to be, an assembly in one place; and, consequently, I need not add, that this must be one congregation, one fellowship, one assembly, meeting together under their proper officers, for the purpose of enjoying the common fellowship, and the maintenance of their common principles.

Another application, however, will be found to be made of the expression. As it is used amongst us, it sometimes denotes a *particular church, in a province or a nation*. And hence the Galatian church, and the Roman church—

extending through all the provinces over which Rome claimed the right to exercise spiritual dominion. The Church of Scotland, the Church of England, and a variety of other churches, are designated *national* churches. And consequently on looking into the churches that thus "walked in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," we endeavour to ascertain whether we find anything of this kind connected, in any instance, with the application of the term "church" in the Word of Truth. Now, here it might be observed, that we can find no instance of any church thus designated. "But," it might be said, "although we allow that the word 'church' signifies an assembly called out—although we allow that the word 'church' signifies a single congregation of faithful and believing men—and surely no one for a moment would question either the meaning of the term in the one case, or its scriptural application in the other; yet it does not follow, that it may not be applicable to a church combining all the communities of spiritual and faithful people in a nation." And it may be said, "the opportunity was not furnished, thus to speak of the provincial or the national churches in these days." Now, if we could not shew, that there *was* an opportunity furnished of alluding to such churches, had they existed—if we could not shew that there *was* an opportunity furnished for forming such national fellowships; yet finding that such fellowships do not occur in the Word of God, we should refuse to admit the legal application of the term "church" to them; meaning by its legal application, its application according to the law of Christ, the Word of God. But it does so happen that we find they *had* various opportunities of speaking of the churches of a province and a nation in this way; and when they had these opportunities, they did not designate them *the church* of such a country. Hence we are furnished, from the Word of God itself, with a decided evidence, that the spiritual fellowships formed throughout provinces and nations, were never consolidated into anything like a provincial or a national body.

Let us look, for a moment, at some passages on this subject. In the first place, let me direct your attention to Acts, xv. 41: "And he"—that is Paul—"he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming *the churches*." Now it does not speak of *the church* of Syria, nor *the church* of Cilicia. The passage takes these different single congregations, consisting of apostolical churches, to which I have already directed your attention; it brings them before us in their numbers, as they were multiplied into different communities; and it tells us that the Apostle confirmed not *the church* of Syria, and *the church* of Cilicia, but *all* the churches scattered throughout these different nations and provinces. If we look again at Acts, xvi. 5, we have the same opportunity furnished on speaking of provincial, or united, churches, if they had existed: "And so were *the churches* established in the faith, and increased in number daily." "*The churches*," you perceive.

Now, this is not the designation of spiritual fellowship employed by national and provincial churches. The members of these do not speak of *the churches* of England, or the *churches* of Scotland; such phraseology is unknown to the adherents of these national or provincial institutions. It is *the Church* of England, and *the Church* of Scotland: and when they speak of the *churches* in Scotland, they always mean the buildings; and when they speak of the *churches* in England, they always understand the buildings. They never think of a

plying the term as they applied it in the days when the churches "had rest"—when they "walked in the fear of the Lord," and "were edified," and enjoyed "the comfort of the Holy Ghost." That phraseology is utterly abandoned; it would not be understood; nay, would be misunderstood. Under these circumstances, therefore, it does appear, that the opportunity of referring to the provincial fellowship, or the national fellowship, was afforded, had such fellowship existed: and the fact, that such fellowships were not referred to, when so clearly an opportunity of reference was furnished, is an evidence to me that they did not exist.

In 2 Corinthians, viii. 1, we have another allusion to the same subject. You will find the Apostle again furnished with another opportunity of noticing such national or provincial assemblies, had they really existed; and you will find what appears to me another evidence of their non-existence. "Moreover, brethren," says the Apostle, "we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on *the churches* of Macedonia." Now, here were the churches of a province; and it does not appear that they formed themselves into any organized fellowship, under the influence of any settled constitution, which was to form the basis of their ecclesiastical administration and government. They are not the *church* of Macedonia, but the *churches* of Macedonia. If we take again 1 Corinthians, xvi. 1, we find the same thing brought again before us: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye." Now, here is another province, the province of Galatia; but there is nothing about the Galatian Church; nothing about the church of Galatia: but a single congregation (to whom I have endeavoured to shew the term is applied in the Word of God) occurred to the Apostle, under the guidance of inspiration, the moment that he turned his attention and his recollection to Galatia; and he speaks of them all as the churches of Galatia.

If we look again to Galatians, i. 21—(and this is the last that I shall quote in connexion with this part of the subject)—we shall find the same phraseology employed: "Afterwards I," says Paul, "came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; and was unknown by face unto *the churches* of Judea which were in Christ." Not the *church* of Judea. Even where the Apostle so long sojourned—where the apostles modelled everything for the purpose of directing the institutions of Christ's kingdom—we do not find that a church, a provincial church, existed; but here the different spiritual churches are brought before us, as "the churches of Judea."

Now, taking this view of the application of the term "church," I should say, that if I were to come to the Word of God, and look for a church, I should be able to discover nothing, either in the first meaning of the term, or in its application to the whole spiritual body of Christ—as including a vast congregation of the ransomed of the Lord—or in its application to single congregations taken separately—or in the distributive way in which it speaks of them in the plural number, when it seems to include them all in a province or a nation—I shall find nothing in any one of these applications of the term that would lead me to take any view of these churches that "walked in the fear of the Lord," and "were edified," and enjoyed "the comfort of the Holy Ghost." I should find nothing, in reference to these churches, thus examining the term,

that would lead me to suppose for one moment that they were anything but what we designate *Independent Churches*. I confess I see no evidence—if I examine the matter with all the deliberate judgment which belongs to so important a question, and throw nothing into it of the passion of a polemic—an absurd passion when examining evidence, obviously, at all times—if I were to examine the passages I have just referred to, and all the others of which they are only a specimen, I could not for a single moment hesitate to say, There are here Independent churches, and nothing but Independent churches.

It may be supposed, my friends, that I may have selected these passages partially: for upon a question of this kind, every species of motive is suspected; every description of prejudice is supposed to influence the inquirer; and every attempt to submit the truth of any investigation to a body of individuals will be found to be met with suspicion, from one or other of these quarters; consequently, if any such suspicion is excited, (and I think the best fruit of our own investigation is, to find that we are putting you into the way of making the investigation for yourselves)—I think if any individual were to take a Concordance, and select every passage in the whole New Testament in which the expression “church” occurs, he would find that the view I have taken of it, including the whole of the people of God, or including single congregations—every where prevails; and that there is not a single passage in the whole extent of the Divine Oracles, that would give any other sense to it.

If it should be said, the whole Israelitish nation in the wilderness is sometimes called the Church, I should say at once, I am not looking for that constitution which directed the movements of the Jewish nation; or else I must have their sacrifices, their ceremonies, their civil enactments, their land-marks, their distribution of territory, their agrarian laws, their poor laws, every thing connected with the whole of their administration. As I find it impossible, therefore, to touch them, without being charged with inconsistency if I do not follow out the beginning I have made, as I allow the Old Testament will not indeed prove the style of government of the Church of God—I must then come to the New Testament again, and say, that nowhere in the whole extent of the New Testament (the oracles of God belonging especially to this subject in connexion with our economy) will the word “church” be found to have any signification but that which I have given to it. That it sometimes alludes to the Church in heaven, is an application of the term, that should not be taken advantage of against this view of the subject. That is still the general idea of whole body of the redeemed; for, whether they are in heaven or earth, the term may be fairly applied to them, as including the great whole whom the Saviour has saved.

Now then, if I were to be regulated in all my conduct, with regard to the application by a community of the meaning of the term *church*, by the application of the term *church* by all the Sacred Writers; and if I were to take the churches referred to in the text, and look to them as a model, and believing (as I must) that every thing said respecting them throughout the New Testament, made them Independent churches; I am then compelled to say, that thus far we do find the origin of Independency, in the apostolical institutions, in the meaning of the term “church,” and in all its Scriptural applications.

But this is not enough. It may be said, and very justly said, we must not



only ascertain the meaning of the term "church," we must see how the churches were constituted and governed. And if we can discover any thing in the constitution and government of the early churches, any thing that may throw farther light upon the question before us than the meaning and application of the term, we are not only warranted in taking that farther light, but we are compelled to employ it. Let us then consider, in the next place, **THE CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT OF THESE CHURCHES.**

And here I would take, first of all, *the admission of members* for the formation of a spiritual body must begin here. If it should be said, we have no right to forbid any individual, who may make a profession of the Gospel, the enjoyment of all its blessings and privileges in church fellowship, as soon as he makes such a profession, I should then direct your attention to the circumstance of the Ethiopian eunuch, mentioned in Acts, viii. 36. "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" This was after Philip (as we find by the preceding verse) had preached unto him Jesus. "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Now, here is an application made for a Christian ordinance; let us see how the applicant is received by the inspired man. Philip was directed by the Spirit to sit with the eunuch in his chariot, to go up to him, and instruct him; and he did so; and after opening to him the Scriptures, and preaching to him Jesus, and explaining the whole character of the evangelical dispensation, the eunuch asks to be baptized. Now, let it not be said for a moment, that we have not this enlarged explanation; let it not be said we have simply the information that he "preached Christ unto him," and that he preached to him from a certain passage in Isaiah, and that the moment this eunuch made a profession, he is at once baptized. You will observe, that, in the record given of the preaching of Philip, there is nothing said about baptism; and yet the eunuch appears to know every thing about it, and asks for it; and although Philip tells him nothing on the subject, this shews that he had explained to him the nature of baptism, although we are not previously told he had done so. It appears, therefore, that Philip had explained to the eunuch, not only the grand outlines of the economy of redemption, but that he had explained also the outward ordinances of the church of Christ: and, having explained the ordinance of baptism, we find the eunuch asking for that baptism which Philip had thus explained. But even then Philip hesitates. The conversation he had had with him appears to have convinced him of his sincerity; and that conversation would shew how far he had succeeded in informing the mind of the man; but he still urges home upon him the importance of a belief, and a belief with all his heart, in the glorious Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, this is precisely according to the Independent mode of admitting members to the church. An individual in conversation discovers that he has information, information on the great things of God; and he is only urged to the fact, that he must recollect that he should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, before he can be admitted to the institution of the Church of Christ. The doors are not thrown open to any comer, to any individual who chooses to adopt the words of the eunuch, and make this profession. Like Philip, the



inquirer would hesitate; and like Philip he would look for satisfaction: like Philip he will be informed with regard to the state of the man's mind; and like Philip he will then yield to the evidence the man has given of his knowledge, and of his sincerity, so far as he can judge either of the one or of the other; and hence will admit him into communion with the church. So far as this case, then, is concerned, we have obviously a specimen of the mode of admission.

If we take, further, Acts, ix. 26, we shall find another illustration. We are told that "when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple." He had made a profession of Christianity to them, and he comes and is desirous to unite himself with them. Now, had they belonged to churches of a different description from Independent churches, he would have been admitted at once, and asked no questions, for conscience sake; there would have been no inquiry about his character, his conduct, his information, his spiritual views of things; there would have been an open fellowship for him. Not so, however, with the churches of Christ at that period. He assayed to join himself to the disciples; but they hesitated: again: they were like Philip with the eunuch: they were not convinced; they wanted farther information and a stronger conviction upon the case: "they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple:" not because he did not profess it, for he did; they rejected his profession; they did not believe it. And no one will doubt that the apostle Paul, who had previously to this period received the vision of the Lord at Damascus—no one will doubt that the apostle Paul, who previously to this period had forsaken all for Christ, and counted it loss—no one could doubt the sincerity, the emotion, the earnestness, and the gravity with which he would make the Christian profession; yet all this is doubted, all this is disbelieved. It would not do to say, that they were trying the man—that were uncharitable; they were doubting the profession of a man who had come to them, for the purpose of uniting himself to their fellowship, and they were justified in doubting him, on the principle, until they had farther evidence. Now that evidence they had in the testimony of Barnabas, in the twenty-seventh verse: "But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles"—when they had rejected him—"and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem." Then he was united to their fellowship; he was received. Now this is precisely the Independent method of admitting to the fellowship of the Gospel of Christ. And, therefore, it appears to me, that we have in this instance a proof, that the mode adopted by Independents in the admission of church members, is precisely that which belonged to the church of old.

If it should be asked, however, have we nothing more on this subject? I should say, Yes. On this subject we have the fact, that all the churches are spoken of as churches "called to be saints;" as the "faithful in Christ Jesus;" as "the spiritual body of Christ." Under such epithets, scattered through the whole of the apostolical epistles, they will give you at once to perceive, that the apostles, who employed these epithets, regarded the parties to whom they were

addressed, as having given this credible evidence of their Christianity, and as having been thus received: therefore, expressing the judgment of charity towards them, they spoke of them just as we should speak of persons that had given this description of evidence.

Taking this view, then, of the mode of admission, supported as it is by the general ideas I have thrown out, I come, in the next place, to inquire, *how they dismissed the individuals who were unworthy, or proved themselves to be unworthy, members of the church.* And here again I take, I Corinthians, v. 9, as a guide upon the subject. If we take that epistle we shall find, that from the ninth verse it reads thus: "I wrote unto you," says the apostle, "in an epistle, not to company with fornicators; yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then ye must needs go out of the world." He is letting them know, that his directions referred to the fellowship of the church, and are not general rules to keep in society. "But now," says he, "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth." Now, here you perceive the rule is laid down. They are to judge all within: they have nothing to do with those who are without, but to endeavour to teach them, and bring them to the knowledge of the truth: to exercise any discipline amongst *them* is not their province. They are not to pronounce judgment concerning them, for the purpose of carrying that into effect; because they are beyond their pale, and beyond their power: they have nothing to do with them beyond the simple obligation to endeavour to teach them, and enlighten them, upon the salvation of their souls.

But when they have judged those who are within, when this was laid down as the constant practice of the church, that all should judge those who are within—let us ask, What were they to do in consequence of the judgment they were to pronounce concerning those who were within? He tells us in the last words of the chapter—"Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Exclude him, dismiss him. A case, therefore, is here brought before us; the prerogatives of the church are laid down: they are constantly to judge those who are within; for this is laid down as the habit of the church, and not as a prerogative only, to be exercised, on this occasion; and they are to apply habitually this prerogative exercised in the case of this individual: having inquired into this case, and having pronounced judgment, they are to put him away from among them. The Apostle says here, that they were not to keep company with those who were covetous. Now, I ask any individual, how a covetous man is to be held up on evidence connected with his covetousness, but by looking to his character generally, to ascertain his disposition. Here then the mind is to be judged, but judged by the outward conduct—its true, its proper index. And, let me add, if any one should say this should be rigid judgment, (although it is not necessary that I should defend what the Oracles of God so clearly lay down)—I would say, that it is the species of judgment on which we all act; we judge every man by his outward appearance. We may

refuse, it is true, (for we have something to do with the question of judges,) to admit that we are judges of the heart; and we may tell others that they should not judge it. But in every thing else we do judge it, and, when this is not the way, we do judge it in this instance too; that is, we judge the heart from the outward conduct, taking the one as the form and index of the state and condition of the other. This is the way it always acts in all its movements; it is the way it ever will act; it is the way it must act; and if it acts not in this way, it acts not at all. There is, it is true, injustice in judging where there is not proper ground, but I protest against the imputation of injustice in a judgment that has ground to proceed upon. Consequently, if we find this to be the case, there is nothing rigid or severe in judging, where a Christian body acts up, in our humble judgment, to those states and conditions of mind which the word of God tells us are essential to the right of uniting in Christian fellowship with a Christian church.—So much for the mode of admission.

Let me now—as I have shewn you how the Word of God admits members, and disciplines members, and that this is quite in the Independent method, and not in any other—let me now direct your attention to the OFFICERS GOVERNING THESE CHURCHES, and see whether we cannot here again find, that Independency has its origin in the New Testament.

The officers of the Church are in the first place designated “bishops,” and in the next place “deacons.” Now, if it should be said that there are other officers—the apostles, the men that had the gift of tongues, the men that had the gift of healing, the men that had the gift of prophecy, the individuals that possessed a variety of superintendence over the general Church of God—the evangelists, like Titus, and like Timothy; if it should be said, “These men appeared amongst the apostolical Church of Christ, therefore they also must be regarded as its officers; and if you adhere strictly to the New Testament, you must have men representing these as their successors, as well as men representing the bishops and deacons you are now about to describe;” I should say, in reply to all this, It does so happen that the bishops and deacons are distinctly prescribed as the standing officers of the Church. The bishops and deacons are not only prescribed as of apostolical authority, as the standing officers of the Church; but their qualification is given for the purpose of discharging this office. Now, no evangelist, no individual possessing the gift of tongues, or healing, or any of the other offices that I consider extraordinary, and intended for the first diffusion of the Gospel—none of these had their qualifications laid down, nor is there any direction about the appointment of any one of them. They appeared for the purpose of meeting the circumstances under which Christianity was at first diffused; but there is no appointment of any other. We are nowhere told, that “if any man desire the office of an apostle,” as he does that of “a deacon,” “he desireth a good work.” We are nowhere told, that “the man that desires the office” of a prophet, the office of one that speaks in different languages, or of one that has the gifts of healing, “desires a good work;” neither are the qualifications laid down in connexion with such a direction as shew us that he is to stand in the Church. They appear in the Church, and do the duty of the particular and extraordinary period in which they lived. We have the history of their appearance, and we have the history of the discharge of the

duties that devolved upon them: we have nothing respecting the appointment of the men; nothing respecting the appointment of their successors; nothing that would direct us in making such a choice: and therefore they passed away amongst the first instruments God employed, just as he employed angels in establishing the Gospel of Christ.

But to shew farther that these individuals were not intended to be permanent—before we proceed to consider the proper officers, to shew the proper functionaries, of the Church of Christ—we may remark, that the extraordinary gifts which they enjoyed were, in the first instance, communicated to the Apostles directly by the Spirit of God; and, secondly, communicated to those who exercised them amongst the different Churches by the laying on of the Apostles' hands. No one had the power of laying on of hands to convey the gifts of the Holy Spirit, except the Apostles. Hence, though Philip himself performed wonders, though he performed miracles that astonished Simon Magus himself in Samaria, he could not convey the gifts of the Holy Ghost to any one whatever, until Peter and John went down to Samaria, and there laid their hands upon the people, and communicated to them the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And Simon Magus wondered when he saw this yet higher exercise of power: if he was astonished at Philip in the miraculous working he displayed before, he was much more so when he found there were others far greater than Philip, who could communicate the gift that Philip enjoyed to others: then he desired the supreme exercise of agency in the bestowment of spiritual gifts; he desired this should be purchased by money for himself. There is only one instance to the contrary; and that is the case of Ananias, who laid his hands on the Apostle Paul. And here I would say, that, in the case of Paul, I find in his reasoning in the beginning of the Galatians, how anxious he was that he should not be considered an Apostle at second hand, or dependent on those that were Apostles before him. And hence, lest it should be said that he held an inferior part, and received the gifts of the Spirit from the laying on of the hands of the Apostles, we find God employing this individual instead of them. And hence you will find, that Ananias bestowing these gifts upon Paul, will furnish an exception to the ordinary rule, namely, that it should be conferred by the Apostles. Not that there was anything inconsistent with the economy of Christianity in extending them to any numbers, but the fact is that it was not so extended. And hence, when the Apostles died, and all those on whom they laid their hands, we can easily conceive, without entering on the discussion of the question about the cessation of miracles—we can easily conceive when miracles ceased to be performed—just when the last of those persons expired on whom the Apostles laid their hands. Thus, then, persons could not possess these extraordinary gifts after the death of the Apostles, except those that had received these gifts from them; consequently they could not; for there were no Apostles constantly to apply the miraculous power they had for the communication of gifts; and these functionaries could not, therefore, as I have stated, be permanent; nor could miracles, or gifts of tongues themselves.

But let me now draw your attention to the officers that are appointed to be ordained in the Church, and whose qualifications are given, since we cannot look to those whom we have already noticed as permanent officers. In 1 Timothy,



iii. from the beginning, we have some directions that will guide our inquiries upon this subject: "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a *bishop*, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection in all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." In the next place, *the deacons* are described in the eighth to the thirteenth verse of this same chapter. "Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let those also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." We have, therefore, the office of a deacon distinctly defined, and the qualifications connected with the exercise of his functions laid down, as well as the qualifications connected with a bishop. If it should be said, we do not find bishops connected with modern Independency; I answer, that we do: we do not find the *word*, but we find the *man*: and I am not, at the present moment, attaching importance to *terms*, any farther than as they may throw light upon *things*. It is possible to have names without the realities signified; and it is possible, in the change of language, to have the reality signified without the names. Hence, under these circumstances, if we do not find the term "bishop" among the Independent Churches, we are not to suppose that on this account there are no bishops. Nor are we to suppose, that even the term might not be, legitimately and fairly, in its true and proper meaning, applied to the pastors amongst the Independent Churches. It will appear that "bishops" and "elders," or, as they are sometimes called, "presbyters," are sometimes employed, as terms occurring in the New Testament: hence it is said—"They had bishops, they had presbyters, they had deacons; you have, even granting your right to the term bishop—you have only bishops and deacons." I should say, in reply to this, that there were not three orders described by these three terms. There are some single realities described by a double designation indicating something respecting the reality itself. The term "bishop" signifies an overseer; the term "elder," signifies an officer made such usually, though not always, on account of his judgment and his experience. And hence it will be found, that the term, whether it may signify an officer or an overseer, carries with it precisely the same idea.

Let us look at some passages, for the purpose of ascertaining this. Take Acts, xx. 17, and you will find an illustration of the statement I have made. "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called *the elders* of the church;" the "presbyters" of the church, that is. Now, this refers to the second order of clergy; that is, it is referred to that order of clergy which we are said to have left out in our arrangement. If, however, we look to other parts of the



context before us, we shall find, that these same persons are designated "bishops," as well as "elders." Hence, if we take the twenty-eighth verse of the same chapter, we shall find another part of the address delivered upon the same occasion, and to the same persons, establishing the view we take, that "elders" and "bishops" are not different, but the same; and that therefore we have not bishops, presbyters, and deacons, or bishops, elders, and deacons, in the apostolical church, as three distinct functionaries; but we have one class of the functionaries in question designated bishops or elders, and the others deacons only. The twenty-eighth verse says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers," (the word is "bishops,") "to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The men, therefore, designated "elders" in the seventeenth verse, you perceive are designated "bishops" in the twenty-eighth verse; and if the expression has not occurred in our translation, it is not on that account the less applicable to the case. The term is "bishops;" "over which the Holy Ghost hath made you *bishops*."

If, again, we take Titus, i. 5, we shall find another illustration of the idea I am now pressing. "For this cause," says the Apostle, "left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain *elders* in every city, as I had appointed thee." That is, ordain presbyters, or officers. And here, then, the Apostle proceeds, and gives the qualification of those elders or presbyters: "If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless." Now, here he is speaking of the ordination of elders, and he designates them, and the qualifications which rendered them bishops. In the fifth verse, therefore, you perceive they are "elders," in the seventh verse they are "bishops:" just as we find them in the other chapter I have noticed, in the seventeenth verse "elders," and in the twenty-eighth verse "bishops."

It is not necessary, therefore, to dwell farther on this subject. There were no officers in the church directed to be appointed, whose qualifications were given, to whom I have referred. I find these officers, therefore, in the Independent system; and therefore this part of its characteristics I find also originating in the word of God.

With regard to *the way in which these officers should be chosen*, something may now be introduced. It may be asked, How are we to have these officers chosen? This is a very important and interesting part of the arrangement of any constitution—to know how to preserve its health and vigour, and to choose those who are to superintend it. Here I would direct your attention to Acts, vi. at the beginning. In the opening of the chapter the Apostle says, "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." Now, here in this passage, you perceive, certain functionaries are wanting; it becomes necessary to fill up the obvious deficiency;

and how is this to be done? The Apostles give their directions most explicitly: they tell the people to choose out, and to look out from among themselves, "seven men of honest report," whom the Apostles might appoint, that they might accept them at the hands of the people; that they might be, in fact, the election of the church, with their apostolical approbation, and their apostolical blessing; and that they might thus give the sanction of their office to the choice of the people in appointing the men they liked, out from among themselves. In this way, therefore, do we find these officers chosen.

But it might be asked, "Where do you find *the pastors* thus clearly chosen?" I answer at once, Nowhere. And then I may be asked, "If you find this to be the case with regard to them, how do you know that these were the deacons of the church? Some have supposed that these were nothing more than a financial or administrative committee over the funds of the church; and hence they have refused to admit the evidence that they were the first deacons of the church." Their supposing that they were only an administrative committee of finance, is a mere assumption; we find it nowhere. That the administration of finance was a part of their business we are sure, because they are here said to "serve tables," and to leave the Apostles thus more at liberty to minister in the great things of God.

But it has sometimes been said, Here we have only an appointment; the deacon's office is another matter; it is connected with something more than finance, because their qualification is given in the passage already referred to in Timothy. I answer at once, there is not a single qualification in the epistle to Timothy, that goes beyond, in any one thing, the passage before us. The individuals here referred to are required to be men of honest report; "men honestly reported of," or, having a report for honesty. They are required farther to be, men "full of the Holy Ghost." They are required farther to be, men "full of wisdom." Do we find anything in the supposed spiritual qualifications for deacons in Timothy, going beyond this? Certainly not, if we are to go on the qualifications. Then you will say, qualifications effectual for every good word and work in which they could possibly be engaged; and we would say, they are identified with a similarity of qualifications, instead of being separated by their dissimilarity. But if I find this election in one place, may I not say, Well, have I anything on the subject of election—anything historically deduced on the subject of election in the New Testament Scriptures, and by the New Testament Church? Yes, I have; and I find it in this passage. Am I then to proceed in a mode of election directly at variance with the only method of election that I find in the history of the apostolic church? Is the only specimen of election given me by the Spirit of the living God to be rejected, nay, opposed and spurned? And am I to believe that I am right in the rejection of the position, because these officers—whether they were deacons or not—whether they were chosen by the people, and brought to the Apostles, and submitted to them for their approbation—am I to place the appointment of all others in other hands, and to refuse that they should have anything to do with them? It would appear to me, that the principal illustration in the history of this election is strikingly instructive on elections universally in the church of God. This is the only one we know. Let us adhere to the only one we know.

I should say, let us not create another and an opposite kind of our own. I dare not do this; the authority of Scripture would not allow me: and, therefore, in elections, the species of election I should adopt, would be, the species of election they adopted. I should not look out another, and say, "This is only one, and therefore when I have an election to conduct I shall have a very different one." I take it, therefore, that the choice of officers is settled by this precedent, illustrating the principle which the church professed and established, and consequently commended to me as the mode of choice adopted by Independency. And here again, therefore, I find Independency originating in the Word of God.

But, again, it may be said (and I know it sometimes has been said), that Timothy and Titus were appointed to ordain the elders over all the churches, to have them appointed in every city. Well, now, if this were for a moment to be asserted, I should say, that between *ordination* and *election* there is a great difference. The Apostles in this passage ordained, but they did not elect. Timothy and Titus, therefore, assisted in ordaining; but they did not elect. The Apostles were infallible men; and yet—to give us a demonstration of the principles of Christian election, that none might question it for a single moment, in any age of the Church to come, without being guilty of the most obvious oversight with regard to this striking incident—the Apostles themselves refused, though they were advocating the testimony of the Son of God—by which the world should be lost, and by which the world should be condemned—they refused to exercise their high and solemn vows, and left the whole with the community before them, in order that we might have an undoubted illustration of the mode of procedure in the Church as a precedent for our own; and if these men practised the only species of choice of this description, surely those who pretend not to have authority, should never pretend to infringe a mode of choice in which they set so striking and instructive an example.

But I should state further, that it may be questioned whether Titus and Timothy allowed any to assist them in their ordination, or their setting apart the individuals that were chosen. Let me remark, that in 1 Timothy, iv. 14, we have some instruction upon this interesting and important part of the subject. "Neglect not," says the Apostle, "the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." Now, if we were again to suppose, that, when Timothy was directed to ordain elders, he did it alone, simply because he only is directed in the instance in question, we may be assisted in meeting this view of the passage by another passage; in 2 Timothy, i. 6, "Wherefore," says the Apostle, "I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands." Now, you perceive that the Apostle plainly states in the one passage (1 Timothy, iv. 14) that Timothy had his gifts by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery; and again in this passage, he is described as performing these gifts by the laying on of the hands of the Apostle. Thus it appears that the Apostle speaks of the laying on of hands, when he only assisted on the occasion. And have we any reason to suppose, that Timothy or Titus did anything more than assist, in precisely the same way, with all the eldership united with them in it, and they only assisting in it, in the ordinations which took place in the different churches that they visited. The two cases appear

perfectly parallel; and, therefore, it must not be said, they had the power of single and individual ordination, because they simply are spoken of as individually engaged in the act, any more than the Apostle (who was higher than both or either) was singly engaged in conferring offices in an extraordinary form upon Timothy. Because in one passage it is said, that the gift he enjoyed was by the laying on of his hands, and in the other, from the same reason: we see at once that he was only one who, upon this occasion, laid hands upon Timothy. I take it, therefore, that Timothy and Titus, when spoken of in connexion with ordination, are not individuals moving about like bishops, personally to ordain, as the exclusive function of their own office, as the exclusive prerogative of their own office, even although that was extraordinary: but they are represented as about to direct and guide the Church, being extraordinarily set apart, and inspired, and gifted for that purpose. And hence they appear to have been aiding and assisting with them in this consecration of the assembly, and this ordination of its officers.

Taking these, then, as the views that I find in the Word of God of officers, I would just glance at one or two passages referring to **THE SUPPORT OF THE CHURCH**: for this is an important part to be considered also.

If we take 1 Corinthians, ix. 9, we shall find there the mode of support strongly brought before us: "For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless, we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar, are partakers of the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." Now, it is quite obvious from this, that, although the Gospel should be supported by those who enjoy the blessing of its ordinances, there was no mode of exacting this support: it is connected with the enjoyment of spiritual benefits, and the individuals refusing to give it were responsible only to God. If we take again 1 Corinthians, xvi. 1, we shall find how they were supported. "Now concerning the collection for the saints," the Apostle observes, "as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." In Galatians, ii. 10, we find precisely the same subject brought forth, namely, the care of the poor. "Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do." Scattered through the whole of the epistles, indeed, we find injunctions on this matter.

If, therefore, I take, as I have done, in the first place, the meaning of the term Church; and, in the second place, the government and constitution of the Church, with the admission and dismissal of its members, the appointment of all its officers, and the management of all its affairs; and if I take, in the third



place, the way in which the Church was supported, at the period when the Church "walked in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," and were "edified" and "multiplied;" and if I find, that in connexion with these churches and these benefits, there were no symptoms of any system but the Independent, to which I have been referring; I am shut up to the inference, that *Independency originated in the Word of God*; and I am shut up to the farther inference, that *there is nothing but Independency there*.

It may be said, "Are you prepared to assert that you are right, and every one that in this instance may differ from you is wrong?" I should say, I am prepared to assert this with regard to *my* opinion—and I should say, that every man ought to say this with regard to every opinion—It is very possible that in this I may be wrong; and this is admitted at once: but while I am fully satisfied by evidence, of the truth of anything, must I not, under the influence of this satisfaction, aver that I am right, and that those who differ from me are wrong? For would you have us to go back again to the school of a philosophic scepticism, and doubt every thing for ever? Are we to be thrown upon a system that would make us ignorant whether we are called on to go to the right hand or to the left? And are we to refuse to avow principles the most sacred, the most high, and the most holy, lest we should be guilty of an offence against taste, or lest we should be guilty of touching the delicacy with which any individual is ready to feel his pleasure affected, when we tell him he is wrong? If we are disposed to hold truth, we must hold the principle I have stated, that we are right; and this we must hold while we are convinced that we are right, and that those who agree not with us are wrong. If we were to adopt the principle of doubt and mutual concession, with regard to the great truths of the Gospel, what would be the result? Am I quite sure that I am right in the views that I adopt of the way of salvation, and that every one else is wrong? Must I say, No, I am not; and thus leave the whole ground of a sinner's hope uncertain under him, and convey to him no distinct idea of the foundation on which he should stand before God? I do not say but there are more important matters: more important or less important will not affect the principle; I am to circulate the truth: I cannot circulate it, if I do not believe it; I do not circulate it if, when I believe it, I do not tell others they are mistaken. I have no right to be arbitrary, assuming, or dogmatical: these are moods of temper, sinful in themselves, that we have no right to indulge on any subject, whatever that subject may be. I have no right to call forth feelings of malignity, or feelings of indignation. If any man were disposed to tell me this is right, when I know it is day, I must only meet him on the absurdity of his assertion, and tell him he is wrong: and if he should tell me, that I have no right to say that I am right, any more than that he is right; I tell him I have, on the ground of my conviction: and if he refuse to believe the assertion that I make, he has an equal right with me to aver that he is right, and that I am mistaken. But truth must perish from the earth, and must so blend with error, that we cannot feel its influence or enjoy its benefits, unless we really come into the position I have taken, and make our averment on our conviction, and hold that, if we are right, on the evidence that we have before us others are wrong.



Let me, in the last place, direct your attention, which I shall now do very briefly, to **THE CLAIMS OF THIS INDEPENDENCY.**

I hold, my friends, that Independency has high claims upon us, *because it is of divine origin.* It has sometimes been said, that absurd doctrines have been entertained as doctrines of divine right; for example, the divine right of kings to govern wrong; the divine right of prelacy, the divine right of the presbytery; the divine right, in a variety of instances, applied to human affairs. And hence, to speak of any thing as a "divine right," appears to me to adopt a phraseology that the world and the Church have agreed to banish from their vocabulary.

Now let me, for a moment, look at this readiness to throw away this phrase. It is not because there is no divine right, that it is absurd to apply it to certain things; it is just because it has been improperly applied. And if we are to run down every phrase that has been improperly applied, we shall find ourselves utterly destitute of a vocabulary that can convey just views of our feelings and sentiments to one another. But I hold that the Bible stands on the ground of divine right: no one can question this. The Bible has a divine right to demand our obedience; it has a divine right to assert its doctrines; it has a divine right to urge its precepts. The Saviour, when he appeared, had a divine right to introduce a new economy: the Apostles had a divine right to diffuse the knowledge of the economy thus introduced. And hence, under these circumstances, we find divine right constantly illustrated, and very properly applied.

Now whatever has the divine sanction, has a divine right to the extent of its demands upon the conviction, and the feelings, and the practices of all. Unless we are to throw away divine right from the Bible, divine right from the Redeemer, and from the Apostles, we must not deny any thing merely because divine right is connected with it. And hence I have no hesitation in speaking, according to my conviction, a sketch of which I have laid before you—in speaking of the divine right of Independency. I call it a divine right, because I find nothing else in the New Testament. It has a divine right, therefore, I would say, to claim your homage. It does not appear to me that anything else is contained in the Oracles of Truth; and therefore I am bound to admit these oracles; inasmuch as I conceive the system comes directly from God: for the field over which I have been travelling, is a field which the Holy Ghost has planted; and the fruits that grow up in it are of the right-hand planting of God. Whether I may be right in the view I have taken of the Word of God on this question, is another thing: but let me assert that this system is in the Word of God, or any other system, and I am bound to accompany that assertion by a corresponding one, that that system is a system founded on divine right.

But again: I would urge the claims of Independency, *because I think Independency best suited to the moral constitution of man.* My friends, we cannot, upon the grand question of religion, yield to the veto of any individual, or the authority of any individual, and so give up our conviction or knowledge. Whether those convictions may be groundless or not, and whether that knowledge may be correct or erroneous, our faculties are not at our bidding, like the

limbs of our body. We cannot stretch out the understanding to receive that which is obviously unsuited to its conceptions, as we can stretch out the hand to accept of punishment to which we may be compelled to submit. We have no power over our understandings ; opinions have power over them ; and where we come in contact with these opinions, we must yield to them : if those understandings are enlightened in a proposition, they dare not refuse it. Take a man whose understanding has thus been enlightened, whose judgment has been convinced : bring him to the stake ; threaten him with all the punishment which persecuting invention can possibly discover as applicable to the tormenting of his body ; bring that punishment to bear upon him : but you have not touched the understanding : that dwells, shielded from your vengeance, within the tabernacle that you are taking down, and which, when you have succeeded in taking down that tabernacle, will ascend with its convictions to heaven. You cannot touch the powers and faculties of the human mind : you may compel the individual to profess what he does not believe ; you have the word of his lips ; but his thoughts are not with you. You may compel the individual, either by bribes, or by torture, or by some other improper influence, to turn away from the opinions that would enlighten him, and thus keep him in darkness, and so carry his mind with you. But you succeed in this just because you do it at a certain stage ; you prevented it going farther in inquiry and in its progress towards development ; you denounced it, because it was ignorant, at that moment to be a slave ; a slave it became : it acts henceforth in the chains in which you at that time enclosed it. And you succeed, in exercising your dominion over it, not because you are capable of touching its faculties, but because you have taken them before they were informed and matured, and prevented their being informed and matured. And if you glory in the homage done by faculties thus paralyzed in the outset of their intellectual career, your glory is not good. But this system requires no such trammelling of the powers of the intellect : all are free ; every one acts under the influence of the principles of the Gospel : the Word of God is the common fountain of information for all : and hence, when to that Word of God all come, if some should have one interpretation of a passage, and some another ; the Independent system admits of forbearance in this instance ; and unless there is a direct violation of the recorded decisions of the God of Truth, that forbearance will be extended to the parties.

But again, without dwelling further on this point, I would say, that Independency has its claims upon all, because *it is suited to extend the Gospel of Christ throughout the universe*. Other systems, my friends, may for a moment be glanced at in this department of the discussion before us, but without at all attempting to go into their frame-work, or their working.

Let me suppose a nation to create a Christian machinery, for the purpose of extending the truth throughout the earth ; and that nation has identified its efforts with its revenues, with its laws, with its diplomacy, with all its movements ; then what would be the connexion thus established between that nation, and the nation on whose religion it was going to make a national attack ? Could you say that connexion were a friendly connexion, grounded on the common principles of international law ? Could you attack, for example, the empire of Turkey, by a mission, sustained by the national revenues, the national power, and

the national religion of England? Would it be possible to begin a mission upon such a principle? Should we not have immediately from the Divan a most solemn protestation against this contempt of the religion of the empire? Should we not have from the ambassador at our court the most solemn notifications of his high displeasure, and the instructions he had received from his master to put a period to this national crusade upon the religion of Turkey? Would it be possible to interfere with the religion of France, any more than with the religion of Turkey, under those circumstances? Would it be possible to interfere with the religion of any nation, if nations only were to manage the means of Christian instruction? Would not the world remain ignorant and untutored to the last? Would it not be fair to say, "We give you the opportunity of trading with us; we give you full scope for commerce and political relationship; but we do not desire you to take on yourselves to issue the fiat of your government, and sustain with the weight of your finances and the weight of your power, to overthrow the principles which we have chosen to profess." But let Independency take the place of a nation on such an occasion; and let the humble followers of Christ go forth, as they do, with their lives in their hands; let them meet all the consequences of opposition and persecution; let them raise the standard of the cross where they involve no national policy, and excite no popular jealousy; and let them hold up the spiritual things, and go out and speak to sinners perishing for lack of knowledge, and not stand by the might of any arm but the arm of God; and here is the very way in which the leaven may be cast into the meal, and extend its leavening power, until the whole lump is leavened. I know no system which can thus operate, except the system to which I have referred you; and therefore I press its claims on this ground—that it can go out into any land to carry out the Gospel, and provide a spiritual machinery for its ornament and defence, which no other system can accomplish.

If it should be said, this might be done by a religious body in the land, unconnected with the nation—I here again deny it might be done. Some good might be done in either of the ways I have been referring to: but still this assembly would be looked to by the nation to which it had sent out its ministry, and regarded as an active body of men, exercising the judicial and executive power over those that represented them among the heathen. That body, could it really be known in its character, would be an object of jealousy; not so much as the nation; but still in the degree and in the extent to which it would become an object of jealousy it must be powerless.

If we go farther, and take the Independent system again, and regard it as establishing itself, without looking to any judicial body, without looking to any executive; if every church and spiritual community has its own administration; if there is no connexion in the whole Word of Truth, which forms the basis of all its movements, that would establish anything like apprehension or fear on the part of others, or jealousy either; it could take its stand where no fraud could possibly operate, and where jealousy would not be perceived. But if any should say, it wants union for this, I should here answer again, It has all the union that is efficient, and nothing of the union that paralyzes. If you look into the apostolical epistles, you will find messengers from this church, and messengers from that—fellowship amongst the large congregational communions

maintained through all the churches, made to bring the inspired epistles, made the messengers of communicating with the Apostles and other churches, of the faith, and hope, and stability of their brethren in other communities of the great spiritual body of Christ; and you will find an activity which realizes the prediction of the prophet, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased," carried out through the whole face of the apostolical epistles, and involved in the whole extent of the history of the apostolical churches; and known to none of the organized schemes, which would excite jealousy, without having this view of their Scriptural unity. There is nothing, therefore, to prevent unity so far as co-operation is concerned—but everything to prevent unity so far as judicial and executive power are concerned. We protest against the unity of legislation, and we protest against the unity of execution in consequence of legislation: but we do not protest against the unity that lies in brotherly kindness, in community of views, and in community of exertion: on the contrary, we live peaceably, secure of that unity: and we are compelled to adopt the sentiments of no body external to ourselves, whilst we can act with all that may call themselves brethren in Christ.

Lastly: I consider the Independent system as having claims upon the people of God *because it is liberal*. I have no doubt that it may excite some surprise, that I should say that a system is a liberal system, which, whilst it asserts its own divine right to urge the precepts of the Gospel, denies the scriptural authority of others. For this must be the character of that system, should its claims be true. But, my friends, when we come to look at liberality, and ascertain what it really is, I think there will be no surprise at my considering the Independent system as a liberal one. I am quite aware that the term "liberality" is very frequently understood to mean, the refraining to exercise our own sentiments with any degree of distinctness, in a great many matters not of the highest importance, lest we should touch the feelings, or seem to offend the judgment of others. Now, I consider "liberality" to signify the liberty which I am called on to allow to every man, to think and act for himself. This is not liberality that silences me, that I may not disturb the feelings and reasonings of my brother; this is not liberality that silences me, lest I may appear to impeach the justice of my brother's conclusions. Liberality has nothing to do with the silencing of any one—liberality unseals the lips of all, permits all to speak. Liberality does not, in any instance, curtail the freedom of any body: it signifies individual and universal freedom. It is not the giving up of freedom on my part, and the giving up of freedom on the part of another, and the giving up of freedom on the part of a third, that we may all have harmony, just because all of us have nothing which we would differ about. This species of harmony would be nothing more than a kind of exterior delusion; and, far from being calculated to bring the minds of individuals near to one another, it would forbid the occupation of that very ground on which these minds may be united. If I do not speak, and my brother does not speak to me, lest we should offend one another, then the ground on which we meet, and which is held to be neutral ground between us, is the ground on which we must always be silent: yet it is all that is essential in the case. This very neutral



ground we dare never occupy; there is all the space which lies between us, therefore we are prevented from ever meeting by the interdict that prevents us occupying this neutral ground. I should say, let there be no neutral ground: let there be a distant spirit; let there be sound thinking, or, at least, an attempt to think soundly; let the word of God be examined in common, and all the principles between you and them; you are on this neutral ground, and while each has his peculiar territory, it may be, at least, adjusted between you: there should be no neutral ground. When you have ascertained the real character of the spirit you are proposing to consecrate, you find, while you may divide it between you, and possess it in common, that it becomes all your own. And thus each several territory is found to belong to the great body, and the neutral ground separating between these common territories is found to belong to the great foe.

I reckon that, therefore, to be liberality—to think, and speak, and act boldly at all times and at any time; leaving the exercise of discretion in these matters with the individuals themselves, questioning the exercise of that discretion, if we find it had not been properly exercised: and so making every subject matter of inquiry, investigation, admonition, instruction, doctrine, and reproof, between us, that we may be thoroughly instructed in every good word and work. Liberality, therefore, and liberty, are with me, precisely the same. Call that which is usually called liberality, “concession,” if you will, and you have rightly named it; call it “a mutual giving up,” and it has its own designation. Then also call it “a common surrender on each side,” and you have also a proper phraseology. But never call it liberality; for that would be insisting on the part our brother shall occupy, and the part we shall occupy and excluding all liberty.

I urge the Independent system, therefore, because it is a liberal system, and allows each man to think for himself, and each church to think and act for itself, whilst, at the same time, it maintains the strict unity of the whole. And if, my friends, we were thus to adopt the Independent system in all its bearings in going out and coming in—were we, like it, constantly referring to the Word of God; were we, like it, constantly seeking to extend the knowledge of that word; were we, like it, engaged in the service of enlightened liberality—what must be the advance, the rapid advance, of Christianity!

I am quite aware, my friends, that in submitting this subject to you, though I have occupied so much of your time, I have only touched its leading parts. Could I go into all the points, to which I might refer, I know many an objection might be met, many a doubt solved, and many a difficulty removed. I have, however, directed you to the general outlines on the subject, and I press it on your attention and consideration. Reflect whether in religion God has sent his truth into the world without any executive means to bring it to bear in the world. And if you look into the Word of Truth for the means that he has appointed, say not they are not directly stated, but only by inference; for I must be permitted to remind you, that the doctrines we draw from the Word of God are all doctrines drawn by inference. We gather up the divinity of Christ, the atonement of Christ, and the salvation of the sinner, out of conversations between him and the Jews, out of letters written by the apostles to the churches



And so we must come unto a description of evidence, abundantly satisfactory, abundantly luminous and clear; but, at the same time, furnishing only the grand elements, out of which we draw certain inferences. Hence, therefore, it is God's method of teaching; and it is the best and the safest. And here, when we come to examine the word of truth, let us take all its bearings with us; and when we have come into the condition of the church, whose case we have been considering, we shall then find, that like them, we shall be able in the spirit of Christian charity, to "walk in the fear of the Lord," to be "edified," to "enjoy the comfort of the Holy Ghost," and "greatly be multiplied."

## INEQUALITY IN HUMAN CONDITION GOD'S OWN APPOINTMENT.

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"The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the Maker of them all."—PROV. xxii.

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THERE are many things in the dealings of God with a lost and ruined world, which are very hard of comprehension to creatures who possess only our finite grasp of understanding. There is much in the processes of the divine administration of the world, which it is very difficult for us to make to square with our own preconceived opinions. God's ways are not as our ways, neither are God's thoughts as our thoughts. He exercises the right of sovereignty: he hath formed all things; and therefore, by the inalienable right that belongs to him, he administers all things: he provides for, and he sustains; and therefore, in the dispensation of his Providence, as well as in the original distributions of creation, we find God asserting his own independent claim. Now, though it is impossible for us to search out, in all the minuteness of detail, the reasons of the divine dealings with the world—though we would not even desire to be wise above what is written—yet it is plainly our privilege—moreover, it is our duty, to inquire into those things which the Lord has revealed to us in his Word.

Now, the text opens to us the consideration of a subject, which I think may not be unprofitable, and which I believe is not inappropriate. In the first place, I would endeavour to prove to you that inequality in human condition is God's own appointment; and, in the second place, to open some of the principal reasons for this dealing of God.

INEQUALITY IN HUMAN CONDITION IS GOD'S OWN APPOINTMENT. It is beyond all denial that poverty, as well as every other evil to which human nature during this, its trial-time, is exposed, results simply and alone from the sin of man. God is the source and the well-spring of all good. Evil proceeded not from him, but because man transgressed the laws of his Maker there was the intruding of a mighty tide of sorrow on the world which was thus desolated: and amongst these sorrows, which man's own transgression brought on himself and his posterity, poverty is to be numbered; so that it remains as a standing memorial of sin; so that there goes up a voice from every dwelling place of want and woe that there hath been sin in the world; and the very same great essential foundation truth is written in the lines of grief upon every brow.

Now, we do not mean to make a special application of this matter. We do not, for a moment, intend to affirm that those who are in the depths of poverty, who are bearing the burden of heavier calamity than others, have therefore

been greater sinners than others : but we do say that wherever there is sorrow, and (as in the subject especially before us) wherever there is poverty, there is the evidence that sin hath entered into the world.

It is a remarkable fact that poverty has existed in every country, and in every form of society with which we are acquainted. In ancient times, as well as modern ; amongst the highly civilized and cultivated, as much as those who are sunk in the debasement of savage uncivilization ; amidst all the variety of political changes, amidst the rising and falling of dynasties, amongst the various forms of government, plastic and harsh, still poverty has remained ; and, in spite of the benevolence of man, in spite of the benevolence of philosophical and refined minds, *still* remains : so that luxury and want, superfluity and need, have been in the closest juxta-position—have been almost as it were chamber-fellows.

Now, if we receive the notion of a superintending providence (which, I trust, there is not one here inclined to deny), we cannot question that these things are by God's permission. In the wide sweep of that glance which goes through creation, and which rests on the dimmest and most inconsiderable spot in all the universe which God at first formed, not one portion is overlooked ; not the smallest creature which forms a link in the chain of animal existence is forgotten of God. We are quite sure that all the forms of mankind, with their immense variety of interests, and the apparent entanglement of their concerns, are all open before the eye of Him with whom we have to do : and since He, who thus looks with watchful eye on the concerns of all, is the same who, by resistless hand, administers the concerns of all, we come to the conclusion immediately, that these things cannot be without his permission.

But we are prepared to advance beyond this, and to affirm that God not only *permits*, but that he *appoints*. We cannot pronounce what would have been, in this respect, the condition of an innocent race in a world which crime had never defiled ; we cannot pronounce how it would have been with the lineage of un-fallen man : we are quite sure there would have been no pain or privation ; and the teeming earth would have poured forth, from her own rich storehouse, enough for the supply of all the wants of all who trod her surface. But we are by no means prepared to affirm that, notwithstanding this, there might not have been as many, and as plain, distinctions in human society, though that society existed and was held together in a world on whose surface the footprint of sin had never trodden.

Neither can we affirm with any degree of certainty—though the question is one of very deep interest—what shall be the condition of the restored creation, tenanted by blessed ones, purified from all sin, and taken far away out of the reach of all sorrow. We are not prepared to affirm one opinion, or the other opinion—whether or no there shall still subsist distinctions of rank—whether some shall be in the inner circle, in greater nearness to God, wearing crowns of brighter radiance, singing anthems of sweeter melody, and sent forth by God upon missions of higher trust ; it may be so, or it may not be so : but we are quite aware that the authority of Scripture texts may be arrayed on the one side, or on the other side. Concerning the unfallen world, therefore, and the restored creation, we do not affirm.

But concerning God's dealings with a fallen state, his dealings with those who have gone far from the original purpose and design of their creation, we

are bold to affirm that God hath appointed more than this: God, by his providence, doth maintain inequalities of condition. And we see that this precisely agrees with the analogy of all God's dealings. The whole of nature is one vast system of unequal distribution: even in the lower walks of animal life we find the obtaining of the same principle; and when we have made all possible deductions because of the adaptation of the creatures to the circumstances in which they are placed, and the various systems of compensation which we find so beautifully established for the supply of the apparent deficiencies—when we have considered all these things, there still remains yet unexplained a vast amount of difference of condition. So in respect to human creatures, the higher and the more intelligent walks of creation: we may explain away a great deal of the apparent distinction, and may say, that those who are raised high in station, and those whose affluence seems to abound, at the same time are charged with weightier responsibility, and anxieties and cares cling closely to the possession of wealth: yet it is beyond denial there exists in human condition a vast variety of advantage. We therefore think this is God's established mode of dealing, and that, in the divine administration, God is giving to his creatures a model for their own internal government.

Now, there is a great deal which even the most trusting, and even the most calm-minded amongst us, will perceive, in the present aspect of society, to cause us alarm. We may almost believe that there is amongst us the slumbering of the volcano, that shall, in our own day or the day of our children, break forth and pour its consuming stream over the land: we find it not difficult to believe that we are just now in the calm before the out-breaking of the mighty storm: and it may be we are now pressing with our footsteps upon the verge of the latter day; and that there is coming upon us much of tremendous and unimaginable trial. Amongst the various reasons why we come to this conclusion is this: we mark with great fearfulness that the apostles of disorder are abroad in the land, and that they would rejoice to confound the social and the individual rights of men, because (we believe) they hope in the fermentation of society, during its transition-state, having the smallest proportion of character or of possessions to lose, to be the greatest gainers. We think that, in our own day, there hath arisen a restlessness of established order, an impatience of appointed authority and control, a contempt of dignities and superiority. Now, we say broadly, concerning this matter, that with the political bearing of the case the minister of the Gospel has, in his pulpit and elsewhere, absolutely nothing to do: and if we were pressed even to give an opinion on this, we think it were an abundantly sufficient answer if we reply in the words of Christ, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" We would leave the potsherds of the earth to strive together about these things. Yet with the religious and with the scriptural bearings of the question, we have, I trow, very much indeed to do, for we have the fulfilment of an apostle's duty before us.

Now, since it seems that God, in the established order of his providence, hath appointed, and doth maintain the varieties of human condition—it is a perfectly tenable position, that they who are striving to confound these distinctions, and to place the rich in array against the poor, and the poor in array against the rich, are not only doing that which shall be for the harm of society, but that which tends to contravene the declaration of God himself. For how could



these distinctions in society be maintained, unless God were continually interposing with an unequal distribution of his own gifts? And how unequal that distribution is, must be, to the thinking and the reasoning mind, a matter beyond all doubt or denial. We do not question for a moment, that God bestows upon one person richer and rarer gifts than fall to the lot of another. Upon one he bestows intellectual treasures, the power of strong and resistless argument, the power of eloquence to commend his words to the acceptance of others; the means of persuading men's minds, and controlling them; coming forward in difficult and troubled days, to stem the tide and to turn it back: nor do we question that such an one, in any reasonable and right state of human society, rises to higher consideration; he will become the benefactor of his country and of his race: his name is handed down to posterity; and he has a monument by every fireside, and a memorial in every heart: and we think it must be a low, debased nature which would gratify itself by pulling down such an one to the level of the unintellectual and the undistinguished; we believe it rather to be a high and noble thing to render honour where, by God's providence, honour has been so rendered.

Now, finding that God thus distributes unequal gifts, we believe for the very purpose of establishing unequal conditions, we turn to the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, and, sitting at his feet, are anxious to hear from his lips whether this view is established, or whether it be contravened. And we find the Saviour—and we do not at all shrink from the assertion—during the whole of his stay on earth, most carefully abstaining from any interfering with the established orders of human society. And not only so—he *maintained* them: he said, on the one hand, “Render,” in the civil department, “to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s;” and in the ecclesiastical department, he bade those who profess to belong to God’s community to observe and to do the things which are enjoined them by those who sit in Moses’ seat. He did not endeavour to confound the ranks of human society, nor to confuse the distinctions which were established by the unequal distribution of wealth; but to the rich he said, “Sell that ye have, and give to the poor;” and to the poor he said—not that they had equal claim to what had been rendered or obtained by the providence of God on others—but, “Take no thought for to-morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.” He bade them mark how the lilies grew, and how the ravens were fed, and to remember that their Father in heaven would not forsake them. And precisely the same do we find to have been the teaching of Christ’s favoured Apostle, who went forth to promulgate far and wide on the earth the tidings of heaven’s mercy: “Render to all their due; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; honour to whom honour.”

Herein we see again, evidence of God’s kind and beneficent dealings. Here we see again, that, if the Lord’s manifested will were followed out in all the extent of its operations on earth, there would be happiness far more largely established in society than we have yet witnessed. For truly may we say that, if the unscriptural experiments of ungodly and unrestrained men were to be made and were to succeed, the effect must be only the ruin of social and individual interests. If it were repeated again and again, the result must be to crush and to pull down all the exertions that could be made by men for the



amelioration of human society, and enlarging the compass of human privilege and comfort. For if they who had put forth unceasing effort, and who had toiled mentally and bodily, were to have the fruit of their effort and their energy wrung from them, they would soon cease to make the effort, and sink down into the torpor of utter inactivity. We can imagine nothing more disastrous to any land than that in God's providence the experiment should succeed of levelling all conditions. There would be, indeed, the acutest suffering for the injured; and there would be a tremendous amount of evil inflicted by his own act upon the injurer. There would go forth the cry of an unhappy and despoiled population, until it sunk and was unheard, because there was the cry of despair on the face of the whole land.

We think, however (and this is a point of which we would by no means lose sight), that those who now occupy the lower places in society would be incomparably the greatest sufferers—that the largest amount of evil would be laid upon them. There would be poverty more deep, misery more hopeless, destitution and want more abject, than the world has ever yet seen: the channels of public provision would have been dried up, and the resources of private bounty and benevolence cut off: the widow and the fatherless, the perishing, the sick, the destitute, would be left to die; there would be none to help, for all would have been made alike poor; the rich would have been made poor—the poor could not, by any possibility or contingent circumstance, have been permanently and abidingly rich.

I trust I have been able—though the consideration of the subject has been brief and imperfect—though we have only trod the outskirts of the matter—to fasten on your minds this conclusion—that distinctions of rank are according to the analogy of God's palpable and apparent dealings; that it is according to the revelation of his will in his own Word; according to the teaching of Jesus and his apostles; and, moreover, that it is most promotive of human happiness, and enlarging the amount of compensation of human misery in this our fallen sin-ruined world

I propose to consider, in the second place, SOME OF THE REASONS WHY THIS INEQUALITY OF HUMAN CONDITION IS PERMITTED, independently of that which we have already considered. We might find many reasons in the display of the divine character, and the vindication of the divine attributes: but we will speak only of one class of reasons why it appears to us the Lord permits this inequality to subsist, and why he preserves the distinction.

If it were not so, *a very large number of the Christian graces, enumerated upon the pages of God's own Word, must remain without exercise, and could not be carried forward to their results.* They would want the material whereon to work; they would want the standing place from which their efforts were to be put forth. Now, we find by the existence of these varieties of human condition—or, in other words, the existence of poverty on the one hand, and of wealth on the other—that there is granted to the poor the opportunity of displaying the brightest and the loveliest of Gospel graces. Where should we find in the wide world so touching an exhibition of the power of faith, as when they who, having no other refuge in the whole compass of this earth, in the lonesome and unfriendly destitution of their hearts, are looking simply and alone unto

God—who are sustained by faith taking them, as it were, by the hand, and leading them through the desert wastes of the wilderness world—never suffering their footsteps to stumble, never suffering their minds to be altogether overcast ; so that though they may be cast down, they are not destroyed—though they may be persecuted, they are not in despair—though they may be involved in the deepest trials, yet never forsaken of God ; but sustained by the blessed principles of faith, able to cling to him, and to hold the promise in their grasp, as their stay and staff, the rod whereon they lean.

Now, if we wanted to commend the gospel of Christ to the acceptance of the infidel, we would use the most powerful arguments with which our own research might furnish us, or which have been presented to us from the workshops of other men's minds ; but we could never hope that any argument would be more effectual than to take such an one to the bedside of an uncomplaining and uncomplaining sufferer, and then show what the despised and scorned principle of faith is able to effect. We would ask, where in all the range of human philosophy there could be found a principle to sustain the poor, forsaken, dying creature, in the midst of the deepest poverty, the most helpless destitution ; and yet that there should be the radiant eye beaming with hope—that we should see the sufferer departing in the extreme of all the body's woes, yet glorying in tribulation, because persuaded that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, that could not make ashamed. It is indeed the most blessed and the most glorious support of Christianity ; it is indeed the most blessed exhibition of the gospel principle, when it brings before us one thus surrounded with a large accumulation of human sorrow, battling with all distress, putting away all the influence of affliction, and standing forth in all the imparted strength of the Christian hero ; never complaining, never suffering one hasty word to pass the lips ; but in the midst of the fever's rage glorifying God, who, in very kindness and tenderness of fatherly affection had appointed the dispensation. At the great day of account such an one shall stand forth, and testify for God before men and angels ; and while the victor in a hundred fields is forgotten, or stands forth only to be covered with shame and confusion, the destroyer of mankind instead of the provider for human misery,—when those whom men have followed with the plaudits, and the shouts of their commendation, will call on the mountains to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb—the warrior, the blood-stained man, who will wish that he had rather never existed than have existed for blood-shed,—the Christian hero, the cottage hero, those who, in their own quiet, unobserved, and unmarked circle, have maintained a long conflict with the host of sorrows that have come in on them, and with the enemies of their souls who are pressing them to despair—they stand forth, and bear witness to what God hath done ; and their voice shall be heard extolling grace—free, sovereign grace, which first looked on them in their state of misery and helplessness, and which held them in, as the chosen and elect of God's Spirit, in all their trials, and brought them at the last, robed in white, and with the anthem of thanksgiving in their mouths, to dwell for ever with Him who redeemed them.

If we knew more of the history of the poor, we should know that in their experience is written out one of the brightest pages of God's providence. We should find many an one able to testify that, in the days of lowest and deepest

extremity, days when the clouds seemed to have overcast all the brightness of the day—then God interposed; and, just as he fed his servant of old by means of ravens, so has he maintained many a perishing Christian, in the midst of poverty and suffering, when he seemed almost beyond the reach of hope. We could tell you of many such a history, but we ask you to go yourselves to the homes of the poor; and you will not go in vain; for you will learn there this lesson—that God interposes for his dear children in the hour of their deepest destitution, in the season of their heaviest and blackest sorrow. It is, indeed, a noble exemplification of this great principle, when the mother can look around on her children, destitute, as she believes, for the day, of the bread that they want to sustain the body, still looking to the fulfilment of God's providence; and though days and years have passed, and every prayer may not seem to have had its complete accomplishment, still trusting God, knowing that in his own good time, relief shall come, and content to say, "It is the Lord, he doeth all things well;" to look upon her poor destitute children, and, in the midst of the deep anxieties of a mother's heart, to be able to say, in submissiveness to her God and Saviour, "The Lord will provide."

We now turn to the converse of the matter, and see how, on the other hand, God has made provision, and furnished, as it were, materials for the exercise of the graces of the Christian character.

There is a plain and a palpable duty laid on the poor: and some of us are ready enough to lift the latch of the cottage-door, and to go into the alley amongst the poorest and the most destitute, and preach to them of resignation, and submission, and dependence upon Providence; but we should remember, on our own side, the responsibility which is laid upon us, to remember that, conversely, God hath appointed poverty that *the rich* may have the opportunity of exercising some blessed graces. How could we practise self-denial—how could we practise that which stands at the very root of all Christian graces, and all the holiness of the Gospel—unless there were some to whom we might apply the fruits of our self-denial? And it is a fine spectacle when this is so applied that we are content to pare down our own personal enjoyments; when we abstract, uncomplainingly, willingly, rejoicingly, and as a privilege, one by one from what we have believed in other times to be almost the necessities of life. It is a fine spectacle, indeed, when the Gospel seduces its disciples from their own warm fire-side, from their own luxuriously furnished homes, to the abodes of the poor, where there is pinching poverty to relieve, where there is sickness to which they may minister the cup of relief, where there is spiritual destitution and despondency to which they may speak the words of heaven's own comfort.

But it is time I leave the generalities of the subject, for more special matter. There exists in this neighbourhood, and very near to your own doors, such a mass of poverty, such an amount of want, so much of spiritual darkness, and destitution, as I believe has entered into the conception of very few amongst us. I would just notice one circumstance, which at present has very much increased the claims of the poor upon us; I mean the alterations in the Poor Laws. That some change should take place seemed, indeed, a reasonable and prudent thing; for we believe the late system was, of all others, the most ingeniously devised for making the rich give without charity, and the poor receive without thankfulness. We believe the operation of the former system was, in almost



every case, to check and to hinder the out-goings of social benevolence, and of family and relative kindness; so that the rich disregarded the poor, because his sustenance was laid on him as a burden from which he could not escape; and we believe also that families had the ties of natural kindness rent asunder—the parent disregarded the child, the child the parent, the brother the sister, and the sister the brother; just for this reason—that the removal of poverty, and the bestowment of comfort, were laid on others than those to whom it ought to have belonged: and we believe the poor have already come to the conclusion, that their own condition will be greatly benefited when they are permitted to take their labour fairly into the market, when they are unconstrained by the alms which the former system allotted to them. But during the transition state, there must be a great deal of painful suffering. Those who have been born and educated all their life long in dependence on a system which now fails them, must, at least for the present, incur a much larger amount of trial. Therefore, on this ground, we make a special appeal to you.

But if, because of those things, you go forth, and, from the very impulse of kindness, are ready to scatter your wealth to every one who asks, the consequence would be, that, in giving to the clamorous beggar on the highway, you would leave many a poor child of want and woe, many a dear Christian pining in poverty, who never told his tale into your ear, and never presented his misery to your sight. You tell me, perhaps, that though you can give your money, you are so occupied with the claims of your family circle that you cannot go to the homes of the poor—that you cannot choose the proper objects from the supplicants of your bounty. That is the reason why we ask you to give to-day, and to give liberally, according to the means God has bestowed upon you.

But if we were only to take of your silver and your gold, and distribute to those who have need, though we should do something, it would be little in comparison with the gift of spiritual bread. When we go to administer relief, we desire to go in the name of our Master—to speak of Jesus, and of his Gospel. We tell those whom we relieve, of another world, of the treasures of salvation that are offered to the poorest; and that, by embracing its offers, they may hereafter attain that happy state where poverty shall cease, where the rich and the poor shall be together in the presence of Him who made them both.

O may we all be there! I believe that even the joys of heaven will be enlarged, if we see, on our right hand and on our left, those to whom we went forth, first to minister temporal relief, and then were permitted, under God's blessing, to speak persuasively of the treasures of salvation—if we see them there, singing the songs of thanksgiving with ourselves, and enjoying the presence of Him who hath called us both to everlasting life. Poverty and pain will be then no more. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

## THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF THE SOUL.

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REV. W. DEALTRY, D.D.

CLAPHAM CHURCH, JANUARY 18, 1835.

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“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”—MATTHEW, xvi. 26.

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FEW duties are more earnestly urged by the writers of the New Testament, than that of self-denial. So contrary are our inclinations to the law of God and the spirit of the Gospel, that, if we would be disciples of Jesus Christ, we must hold continual conflict with the natural desires and propensities of the mind: so little, also, is true religion accommodated to the general views and maxims of the world, that, while prosecuting the great work of our salvation, we must expect opposition, and be prepared to meet it.

In the verses immediately preceding our text, our Lord inculcates the duty just mentioned, in very decisive and remarkable terms. According to another evangelist, he “called the people unto him, with his disciples,” as if he had something of peculiar importance to communicate; “and he said unto them, whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall find it.” It is with the view of enforcing this declaration, and of suggesting an irresistible motive for obedience, that he appeals to them in the words of the text: “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” It is my intention to press this inquiry on the present occasion: and, with this view, let us in the first place, endeavour to explain the passage; and, secondly, to offer some remarks in the way of application.

The question is concerning THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOUL. In speaking of the soul, there is no need that we should enter into any profound or difficult discussion: whatever it behoves us to know on this subject lies within a narrow compass, and is plainly revealed to us in the Word of God. Without this animating principle within us, what is all the dignity of man? “God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” Whereas we look at the human frame, this earthly tabernacle of the body, as a part only of the material creation, and which must soon return to its original state; “earth to earth, ashes to ashes, and dust to dust:” the soul, we find, has a nobler origin; it seems to claim immediate connexion with Him who is emphatically styled, “the Father of



our spirits." It is to this, and to the powers and faculties connected with it, that man holds his peculiar situation in the scale of being ; and with the welfare of the soul, his welfare must therefore be inseparably connected. For it is moreover possessed of large capacities, and is capable of the highest enjoyment. We are no strangers to the sympathies and affections of our own minds, the gratifications of social and domestic life, and to the various relations in which we stand to each other. There is a pleasure in the sensations of mutual Kindness and respect which every virtuous mind must be conscious of. And when we contemplate the great masters of intellect who have shed a light on the age in which they lived, and the records of whose wisdom is transmitted to succeeding times, we cannot but recognize in this enlargement of the faculties, the evidence of an exalted and glorious nature.

But we know that the soul will rise to yet purer and more extended discoveries : the Revelation of God has informed us, that it is capable of sacred and unmingled enjoyment ; that it can stretch its views to realms unknown, to immortality and endless bliss, and attain a perfection of wisdom, which shall liken it even to the angels of heaven. It tells us that this is the state for which it was originally designed—a state of purity without defilement, of knowledge without error, of felicity without the hazard of disturbance. That Revelation assures us yet further, that intimate as is the union of the soul with the corruptible body, it is itself constructed for immortality, and that it shall live for ever.

Now, if we are really conscious that we possess such a treasure in this fleshly tabernacle, so noble in itself, so exalted in its powers, so capable of enjoyment, should we not think it entitled to serious attention ? Would not the wise man be cautious how he debased its character, and degraded its faculties, or injured its powers ? Should we not expect every man to set a high value upon it, and to forego the gratification of inclinations and pursuits which are inconsistent with its welfare ?

But to estimate all this, we must look at the matter in another point of view, for we learn from Revelation that the soul may be lost. "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ?" What then is the nature of this loss ? The term does not imply that we should lose the faculties that we at present possess ; that we should be deprived of thought and reflection, and be reduced to a state of comparative ignorance. Assuredly not ; whatever is the condition of the soul in another world, there can be no doubt it will retain all its faculties in full vigour and sleepless activity. It is highly probable—we might, perhaps, pronounce it certain—the thoughts will be more intense, the reflections more vivid, the perception of knowledge wonderfully increased ; that as there will be an enlarged capacity for enjoyment, so will there be a fearfully enlarged capacity for suffering ; and that where happiness is not, there will be, in the reproaches of conscience, and the workings of a disordered spirit, a constant source of bitterness and of sorrow. As the salvation of the soul is the admission into heaven, so the loss of the soul is the everlasting seclusion from that place of happiness ; the loss of heaven, and the society of the blessed, and the presence of God, and of that fulness of joy which in that presence alone is to be found. It is to be cast into the place of unutterable torment, prepared, not for man, but for the devil and his angels ; where

there is no repose day nor night, but misery, without hope or intermission, for ever.

What then is there which can compensate for the loss of the soul? Our Lord asks, whether "the whole world" can do it. By the term "world," we are to understand generally those things that are "in the world," as St. John expresses it; such things as belong to the world—the riches, and power, and pleasures, and honours of the world: all those objects which are of great ambition amongst such persons as have no right sense of the value of spiritual things. O what can compare with the value of the soul!

But consider these things in their origin. They are all earthly; they are derived from the earth, and have nothing in them which can really satisfy the mind. They promise much gratification; they are acceptable to men of a worldly spirit; and they are frequently not unaccompanied by a sort of enjoyment to those who possess them. But there is delusion and deception in them all. So treacherous are the promises, even of pleasure itself (the pleasure of the world), that, if we should look through civilized society, it may be fairly doubted whether any persons are, on the whole, less at ease, than those who seem most largely to possess it. And what is true of pleasure, as far as it respects its unsatisfying influence on the mind, applies, in a considerable degree, to honour, and power, and riches, and all the promises and professions of this probationary state. The soul was not made to take its repose in things like these; it has cravings and desires (and we all know the fact) which they cannot satisfy; and if there be no outward circumstances to disturb its comfort, it is made to find a source of discontent and uneasiness within itself. And then there are the various troubles which these things almost necessarily bring with them. There are little jealousies and hostilities with others with which such men are continually oppressed; there are cares and perplexities, even in the greatest stations, which no prudence can avert; and there are demands which no foresight can satisfy. And instances are not wanting, where, from pure disgust, men of high station and commanding influence, have cast off the world and all its concerns, and have sought in absolute retirement and seclusion, that peace which they hitherto never could find.

And if, from the nature of these things, however useful and desirable some of them may be in their proper places, they can afford so little real satisfaction, even to those who are in possession of them, or in full capacity for the enjoyment of them—of how little service must they prove in sorrow, and pain, and affliction? It is then the vanity and emptiness of them begin to be justly appreciated. They promise that they have everything that heart can wish; but in the hour of trial, when the soul is glad to find a refuge, they can do nothing. Instead of imparting comfort to the mind, how often does the recollection of talents abused, and gifts of Providence neglected or misapplied, serve rather to exasperate sorrow, and to depress still more deeply the sinking spirit! The season is fast approaching when the great men of the world, as well as those inferior in station, will stand in need of far other comforts than the world can give them; and when, if the faltering tongue can still speak the language of the heart, it will bear witness of the unsatisfying nature of all earthly things.

But there is another circumstance to be noticed relating to the things of the world. They are at best of very limited duration. Unsatisfactory as they are,

yet, if they could continue for ever, men might indulge the hope of finding in them at least mingled gratification, and venture to set upon them considerable value. But in how short a time must they all disappear! "Son," said Abraham to the rich man, "remember, that thou in thy *life-time* receivest *thy* good things." How natural must be the reflection to this man, "My life-time—my good things! In my life-time I denied myself nothing which my heart desired; but O how short was that life—how fleeting those pleasures—how momentary those enjoyments! All that my wealth could procure me was, after a short period of sensual gratification, exchanged for the pain, and the sorrow, and the degradation of the grave: in my life-time every good thing, but now tormented for eternity."

But we need scarcely to go into the world of spirits to shew us the emptiness of earthly things, as it respects their brief duration. Is there among us an individual who has reached the prime of life, and still more one whose days are declining, that does not feel for himself the practical force of that argument? No occupation of the mind can altogether banish that from the thoughts; no determination can render us entirely insensible to the uncertainty of life and all its enjoyments. What is the longest period allotted to man upon earth, when contrasted with eternity? What are the best hopes of this world, when compared with the hopes of the world to come?

Here, then, let us put the question suggested by our Lord, "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" It is proposed, you observe, in the broadest terms—"the whole world." Ahab and Jezebel would commit murder for the possession of a vineyard. Haman would put to death an innocent man, because he loved not to see him sitting at the king's gate. When the mind is set upon the world, it is wonderful how men will exert themselves for a very small portion of it. But the case is put, "If a man gains *the whole world*—all its kingdoms, and the glory of them, as once offered by the tempter to our Lord; so that the lover of pleasure should command every possible enjoyment, the lover of power should possess unbounded authority, every eye watching his inclinations, every knee bending in homage: if with all this, still the man would be profited nothing if he should lose his soul; would he not deem these things to be dearly purchased if obtained at the sacrifice of life? Would he not surrender them all for the preservation of his life? "Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Is there anything which a rational man can regard as equivalent to it; anything which, in the estimation even of the most ignorant, when the matter is fully brought before him, can be compared to eternal salvation? Is there anything which God will accept as the ransom for the soul, when it is once sentenced to destruction? The question implies but one answer: There can be no ransom; nothing given in exchange; if once lost it never can be restored.

Before I pass on to the application of the subject, I would observe, that the general statement here made concerning the worthlessness of all things, as contrasted with the value of the soul, has been acted on by the best men in all ages of the world. They did not, while assenting to these things with their reason, disavow them by their conduct. They reduced their convictions to practice; they were ready to renounce everything which the world could offer, in order that they might approve themselves to God. Such a man was "the

father of the faithful," who left his kindred and home to domesticate in a foreign land: he was a man of self-denial. Such a man was "the lawgiver of Israel," who "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of C greater riches than Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompence of reward." With regard to the great Apostle of the Gentiles, those things that were otherwise gain to him he counted loss for Christ; "Yea, doubtless," he adds, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He spake thus, not as a mere speculator or theorist; it was after he had suffered the loss of all things; the one object of his solicitude being this, that he might attain to the resurrection of the dead. We read of some who willingly endured every trial that they might attain a better resurrection. And it is the general character of all real Christians, as well as of Christ's immediate followers, that they are not of the world; they are of a different character; they belong to a different society; they are looking for a different home.

I proceed now, in the second place, to offer some REMARKS BY WAY OF APPLICATION OF THE SUBJECT.

Let me, then, put the question, my brethren, What has hitherto been the main object of your solicitude, the world or the soul? Have you attended to the interests of this life, or to those of the life to come? The passage seems plainly to intimate, that, if the soul be lost, it is lost by ourselves; and the neglect of the soul, from whatever cause it may arise, cannot fail to be followed by irremediable destruction. The love of the world—that is of worldly principles, may frequently exist in the mind when we scarcely suspect such a thing: whatever be the weak point of our character, the world can present temptations exactly adapted to it. Perhaps we have not promised to ourselves the objects of immediate ambition, the acquisition either of wealth or power: we are desirous to pass through life, without either exciting much notice, or reaching any great eminence. So far it is well; and yet how often may a worldly spirit be concealed in this way, even from ourselves. What, let me ask, is the nature of the subject upon which our minds are most habitually employed? Perhaps you will say, with great truth, that the world has not such a possession of your hearts, as to exclude many thoughts concerning the future state; that you read the Scriptures, and observe the appointed seasons of worship, not without many aspirations for the mercy and grace of God through Jesus Christ. But then, how shall we stand the test mentioned by our Lord in connexion with this passage? ~~X~~ Are we so free from worldly principles that we are prepared to take up our cross and to follow Christ; to bear reproach, if necessary for his Name's sake; and to acquiesce in appointments which are painful to flesh and blood, that we may be numbered with his people? If we have a just scriptural view of the world on the one hand, and of the value of the soul on the other, shall we not be seriously in earnest for salvation? Is it possible we can rightly be impressed with the force of our Lord's statement, or be pursuing that conduct which the Scriptures enjoin, if we are halting between two opinions, if we give ourselves partly to the world which we affect to hold in so little estimation, and partly to the soul, the value of which we acknowledge to be above all price? We admit that there would be no profit, even if we should gain the



whole world, and lose our own soul. We admit that the gain would be as nothing, the loss irreparable. How should we act upon such admission, if we knew that we should not survive this present day! How shall we wish upon a death-bed that we had acted so; how at the day of judgment! If the worth of the soul is such as is represented, what diligence can be too great to make our calling and election sure? For how can any man be acting according to the dictates of reason who does not regard the care of the soul, in the highest sense, as the one thing needful?

The prosecution of this inquiry into our own character, and the practical estimate which we form of God and of the soul, may probably lead some of us to the painful conviction that we have hitherto neglected salvation; while others have good reason to believe, that their great concern has been attended to. The application of our subject would lead me to address a few words to each of these classes, first, in the way of explanation; secondly, in the way of encouragement.

In speaking to the first of these classes, permit me to inquire, on what pretence it is that any can justify this neglect. Why do you prefer the world, and the things of the world, to everlasting life? In some instances this may arise from a want of reflection; your attention has not been sufficiently directed to it. But what a sad apology is this to make even to ourselves. Is there anything more important to which our thoughts can be directed? Is there anything in which we admit ourselves to be more deeply concerned? Are we not aware that if death surprises us in the midst of our sins, it would have been better for us that we had never been born? Are we not aware, that if there be an object worthy to be entertained by an immortal being, it is that which respects the welfare of immortality?

But the want of reflection is, in some cases, not without the appearance of excuse. Can that excuse, my brethren, apply to us? Where men have no knowledge of a future state, and are destitute of the Word of God, they might argue, that though this world was little to be regarded, they, at the same time, knew of nothing that was better. Such an excuse it will be in vain for us to plead. We have knowledge where they had none, or wandered in doubt and conjecture. God himself has addressed us in his Word: he has tested the value of the soul, even by the gift of his own Son: and is it possible that we should not think seriously of this subject? What is there that will arrest the attention, if we regard not the interests of a future world?

In some instances there appears to be an assent to the statements which have been made in explanation of the text; and a clear persuasion that it is the part of every wise man to make a right distinction between things temporal and things spiritual, and to think with all his heart for salvation; but then the present time is not the best time for commencing. One man is too poor and has no leisure; another is occupied with his wealth; another with his family: but each of them is willing to hope that a more favourable season will arrive, when he shall be able to give attention to the subject in such degree, according to its acknowledged importance. So ingenious is the heart in the work of self-deception; so ready are we to acquiesce in reasons for the neglect of the soul. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might:" "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Is there in this congregation any individual, who, having been made truly sensible of the contrast between heavenly and earthly things, is inquiring, "How shall I escape this loss of the soul?" It is the office of the Christian ministry, to point him at once and immediately to that Redeemer, who came to seek and to save the lost; and to declare to him that here is mercy, and mercy now for the chief of sinners; that every one who comes to Jesus Christ, repenting of his sins, and believing in his name, shall be accepted of him. Are you prepared to deny yourselves; to take up your cross, and to follow him; to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world; and, at whatever cost of wealth, or ease, or reputation, to secure this blessing? These are the dispositions that he requires in his people; and of those that thus follow him, he will banish none from his presence. Wherefore, then, should any man suffer himself to be enslaved by the hopes, or apprehensions, or enjoyments of this world? Why should he prepare for himself occasion for bitter repentance, when it is not repentance unto life? If Christ had not died for the ungodly, then would it be vain to disturb ourselves about a doom that could not be averted. But averted it may be; and it will be doubtless among the most harassing reflections of the lost spirit in the place of torment, that he preferred darkness to light, and the world to heaven. "I had much pleasure," such may be his painful reflections; "I had many enjoyments: nothing was withheld from my pursuit which I wished to obtain: but what do they avail me now? I was warned of the folly of rejecting Christ and his salvation for things that perished in the using; but I neglected or despised the warning. I was told of the misery and sin of making the world my portion, but I made it mine; and of the happiness of those that seek a better world, I heard repeatedly; but that portion I sought not. O what would I give if the door of mercy was once again opened, even though but for a day, or a moment! If earth with all its attractions could again arise before me, and the voice of forgiveness could invite me to Jesus Christ, how despicable in my sight would the whole world appear! My soul might have been saved, but I preferred the world; the gift of God was held forth, but I preferred the wages of sin, the misery of that state which never can terminate, and that wrath which cannot be exhausted."

But let me, in the last place, address a few words to those who have reason to hope, according to the expression of our Lord, that they are not of the world; but who having seen the value of the soul, have applied to Christ for salvation. To such we may say, How trifling is the loss, if you should, in the largest sense, lose the whole world, and yet save the soul! You part only with that which can neither be retained, nor bring any lasting advantage; you secure that which is independent of the world, and which cannot be taken from you. But do you indeed leave the desire of things, even in this life? Hath not godliness in an important sense, given you a promise which respects the present world, as well as the world to come? What if you have but little on the earth, is not that little blessed? Is it not sanctified by Him who gave it? And cannot the poorest man in the world, if he possess the spirit of the Christian, have a satisfaction even in the works of God, which the amplest possessions never can bestow? Is it not the saying of our blessed Lord, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth?" We might ask the most destitute of the followers of Jesus Christ, if he possess the spirit of Christ, Do you not cheerfully acquiesce

in the will of your heavenly Father, as it respects your lot, and find a comfort in that state of mind which nothing else could impart? Let us appeal to the apostles, and ask these men, Did you not find in his service an abundant compensation, even here, for all your sufferings? Was it ever a source of regret to you that you renounced the world, and that like your Divine Master, you were by the world rejected? Was it a matter of regret that you were called to suffer for Christ's sake? Did you envy the rich man his possessions, when you knew you were rich towards God? Did you envy the mighty man his power, when you were assured that you were under His protection, who hath all power in heaven and in earth; and even that you yourselves could do all things through Christ who strengtheneth you? Did you look with earnest desire on the pleasures of this world, when there was in your view the prospect of the world beyond it? Nay, when, in this suffering state were you not thankful for all things to God the Father by our Lord Jesus Christ? Did you not, even here, consider godliness with contentment to be great gain? And how will that feeling be increased, and how will the profit of godliness be appreciated, when you reach the world of immortality! Never till that period shall we know it in its full extent; never till then shall we perceive the vast importance of securing the salvation of the soul, the wonderful contrast between them who live only for this world, and them who live for eternity. The one has lost everything that he had; his good things, they are gone: the other is an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ; the possessor of a happiness which all the grandeur and all the glory of the world are utterly unable to shadow forth. Is it a house? It is "a house not made with hands." A crown? But it is "incorruptible." A kingdom? But it "cannot be removed."

May that portion, my brethren, be ours! May we have the wisdom that cometh from above; and look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: and whatever are the trials and temptations of the world, count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord

## THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

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REV. R. C. DILLON, A.M.

ST JAMES'S CHURCH, CLERKENWELL, JANUARY 25, 1835.

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"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."—1 TIMOTHY, i. 16.

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A GREATER man never lived than the Apostle Paul. His labours and travels in preaching the Gospel are without parallel. His zeal had carried him to some of the most renowned cities in the most distant regions of the then known world. He had toiled his way over no small portion of Syria, Arabia, Asia-Minor, and Europe. He had sailed the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, and had thrice suffered shipwreck. He had carried his tract amongst the innumerable islands that so beautifully stud the Grecian Archipelago; and on the site of ancient Troy, on the classic shores of Greece, at Antioch, at Ephesus, at Philippi, at Corinth, and at Athens, he had planted the standard of the cross, and proclaimed the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. How marvellous is it, then, to find him, even to the end of his unwearied ministry, frequently recurring to the day of his conversion, and embracing every opportunity of speaking of himself in his unregeneracy, and of testifying, even to those who might not have known it before, his former hostility to Christ, in order to exalt to the uttermost the honour of that God by whom he had been elected, redeemed, and sanctified.

You have observed, both in the morning and evening services, that this is the day to which our Church more especially directs our notice to the conversion of St. Paul. As the Church, therefore, has brought it under our consideration, we may find it profitable, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, to consider three points which that conversion brings before us. The first is, the necessity that existed for the conversion of St. Paul; the second is, the circumstances attending it; and, thirdly, the fountain of consolation springing from it to every contrite, penitent heart.

Let us first examine (for it requires examination) into THE NECESSITY THAT THERE WAS FOR THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

The Apostle says of himself, in the verse preceding the text, that he was the chief of sinners. Then, of course, there was a necessity for his conversion. But what made St. Paul the chief of sinners? What had been his peculiar guilt before his conversion to the faith of the Gospel? Had he been an idolater, or an adulterer, or a drunkard? Had he been, in any marked degree, a slave to



his licentious appetites? Is it to be said that he was so low in the scale of guilt as to have committed gross crimes? Had he been unjust? Had he been dishonest? Had he given any signs of covetousness? Was he ever chargeable, as Saul of Tarsus, with the guilt of oppressing the poor, the fatherless, or the widow? Do we ever hear of him in the days of his unregeneracy notoriously violating the command to keep holy the Sabbath-day? Do we ever hear of his openly expressing his disregard and contempt of religious duties? Was it in all, was it in any of these particulars, that he had been guilty? Strange as it may appear, he had not been guilty in any one of them: so far from it, that I apprehend no man ever carried a code of morals—that is, of external righteousness—further than it was carried by Saul of Tarsus. (I say *Saul of Tarsus*: and you will understand me to mean before his conversion; after his conversion he was called Paul.) He declares in his epistle to the Philippians, that “touching the righteousness which is in the law,” he was “blameless:” no man could point, in the course of his life, to any open infraction of the ten commandments.

Then does it not strike you—it is very likely to strike some in church to-night, as strange beyond expression, that an individual who had not been an idolater, nor a profane man, nor an immoral man, nor a covetous man, nor a dishonest man, nor a Sabbath-breaking man, nor a man who poured contempt upon religious duties—that such a man should be truly called “the chief of sinners?” Ah! brethren, we come now to enter into the essence of sin—to shew wherein lies its desperate and deep malignity. We are too much in danger of judging of sin merely by the outward act, and often when called to visit the dying bed, are we struck with astonishment to hear the individual say, he has done no man any wrong; he has been an affectionate father, a faithful master, a kind and accommodating neighbour, and as we all have our infirmities, God is merciful, and will take him to his reward: all this springing from the belief, that if we do no wrong in our lives, there can be no wrong in our hearts. Now, brethren, you are not to measure your guilt so much by the injury which it does to society, as by the contempt which it pours on the holy law of God. The sinfulness of sin consists in its being committed against Him; in the opposition and the enmity of the heart to the divine character and will.

Taking this, then, as the standard by which to form our judgment, we shall find that St. Paul’s malignity was, in the sight of God, of no common order. It is certainly true he was outwardly moral, and even zealous, in his religious profession; but he was inwardly a bitter enemy of God and holiness. He hated the Gospel, because it opposed his prejudices, and bade him lay aside his self-righteous hopes of justifying himself by his own works. And because he hated the Gospel, he refused to attend to the proofs which might have convinced him of its truth: he obstinately shut his eyes that he might not see, and his ears that he might not hear; while he conceived and cherished the most rancorous enmity against the holy Jesus, and his faithful followers.

I apprehend, then, that even if our examination into the necessity for the conversion of Saul of Tarsus were to terminate at the point to which I have just brought it, we must admit it to have been guilt of no common order. But the description does not end here; much remains to be added. The virulence

of the Apostle's heart broke out into open hostility against God. It is a fine proof of hostility, that, in the closing scene of his life, writing to his beloved son in the Gospel (Timothy), he tells him in his very first letter, that he had been "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." How many blasphemous speeches had he uttered against the blessed Jesus, and the Gospel of his grace! How many false, malicious, and blood-thirsty words had he spoken against the unoffending Christians! But his rage against them had not been confined to words: he was "a persecutor" as well as "a blasphemer;" he was "injurious." The first time his name is mentioned in the Sacred History is in connexion with the martyrdom of Stephen: when, it is said, "the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul." I cannot help thinking that there is some very strong proof of virulence against Stephen, marked even in this apparently unimportant circumstance. The young men who were witnesses against Stephen, and whose duty in consequence it was, by the existing laws of the land, to be the first to stone him, stripped themselves to a certain extent of their clothes, in order to be unfettered in throwing the stones; and they laid down their clothes at the young man's feet. I can imagine him probably to have been reproaching them for their slackness, saying, "Strip, and stone him; I will take charge of your clothes." He himself indeed testifies very nearly to the same effect; and how feelingly does he mention it: "When the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by and consenting to his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him."

After this, he made havoc in the Church, entering into every house, and, without regard to sex or age, throwing them into prison. His own confession is, "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." You cannot but see, then, how great was the necessity for the conversion of this extraordinary blasphemer and persecutor.

Let us consider, in the second place, THE CIRCUMSTANCES ATTENDING HIS CONVERSION.

Where was Saul when he was converted? Was he attending the sanctuary? Was he smiting upon his breast with agonizing contrition, like the poor publican who went up to pray in the temple? Was he found in the use of any of the means of grace? It pleases the Most High God oftentimes to reveal himself to the sons of men when they are attending the ministry of his word: they have been brought to repentance under the sermon of the minister, whose doctrines they came rather to ridicule than to respect: the Word has reached the heart, and turned the stone to flesh: they have thrown down the weapons of their rebellion, and, weeping as they have looked on those weapons, they have acknowledged the force of all-conquering grace. But it was not so with the Apostle Paul. God is a sovereign, and can have mercy on whom he will have mercy, in the very way in which he himself chooses. We sometimes say he works by means; but he always works by his *own* means—the means of his own choosing, and at the time of his own choosing. It so pleased him, in his infinite wisdom, that the Apostle Paul, at the time of his conversion, should not only not be

seeking for mercy, but that he should not be in the way of seeking for it ; that he should neither be hearing, nor reading, nor praying, nor attending in the sanctuary : in fact, he could not have been at any time more unprepared to receive any manifestation of the divine grace. He was engaged, you know, in a journey of iniquity, in open defiance of the Son of God, crucifying him afresh, and putting him to an open shame. He had received letters from the High Priest, the highest authority of the Jewish people, to the synagogue at Damascus, which was at some distance from Jerusalem, that if he found any of the disciples of Christ, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And he went forth, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against the disciples of the Lord. O there is much malignity folded up in the words "breathing out." I can conceive no representation more strikingly graphic of a mind abandoned to a storm of persecuting rage. "*Breathing out* threatenings and slaughter ;" as the panting of the beast of prey. And there is something peculiarly strong in the word, "still." Saul is said to be "*still* breathing out threatenings and slaughter." The havoc he had already made ; the injury he had already done ; the families he had already been the means of butchering, had been by no means sufficient to satisfy his vengeful spirit. His cruelty to the disciples of the Lord seems to be heightened as he proceeds. What, perhaps, was at first only a warm attempt on the part of the youthful Jew to protect the religion of his forefathers from being overthrown by the Christian, seems to have been increased into an unmitigated thirst for spilling Christian blood. His very existence seems to have depended on the gratification of his rage. His sword was always unsheathed ; and he had, it appears, a satisfaction in making the Christians taste the last dregs of the cup of bitterness he placed before them.

But it is not needful that I dwell on the dark story of the wrongs and wretchedness which the Churches of Christ for a time endured at the hands of Saul of Tarsus. I cannot go into the detail of what we may conceive to have been his merciless, and indiscriminate, and un pitying barbarity. Let it suffice to remind you, that multitudes (we know not how many) of pious and peaceful believers, both men and women, were driven from their homes and their families, hunted like wild beasts, persecuted even unto strange cities, driven beyond the limits of their own country, punished oft in every synagogue, compelled to blaspheme the name by which they were called, and then sent down with violence and butchery to the grave.

But this career was cut short ; and about noon on one memorable day, the day of his miraculous conversion (I say miraculous, because so it was in point of circumstance and outward manifestation, though by no means miraculous in point of inward principle ; because all conversions in point of principle are precisely the same, although in circumstances there may be something miraculous and memorable)—about noon on one memorable day, as he made his journey, fully bent on the imprisonment and persecution of the disciples of Jesus Christ, just as he was coming to Damascus, on the point of setting his foot in that city, which he designed as the next scene of his barbarity, he saw in the way a light from heaven (above the brightness of the sun, or he could not have seen it at noon-day) which shined round about him, and them that journeyed with him. He dropped to the ground, trembling with astonishment ; knowing not what had

happened to him. He heard a voice speaking, and saying unto him in the Hebrew tongue, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." The very first question which the suddenness of this arrest prompted his agonized spirit to ask was, "Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." It was that very Jesus whose humble disciples had been so outrageously assailed, who now stopped short the persecutor in his career of vengeance. O with what an air of majesty did the Redeemer make his appearance! Did the lightnings flash, or the thunders roll, to speak the presence of the incarnate God? No; although the all-gracious Saviour left the throne of his glory for a while, and descended low enough to be visible, yet no terror clothed his brow; he approaches near enough to be heard, but his words are not spears and arrows, neither be they very swords. His language is not, "O thou child of the devil! O thou enemy of all righteousness! I have found thee." No; nothing but the most tender and most affectionate exposition: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? O give me a reason for this conduct of thine; what have I done to deserve it at thine hand? For three and thirty years did I live amongst thy nation; I constantly went about doing good; I opened the eyes of the blind; I unstopped the ears of the deaf; I gave feet to the lame, health to the diseased, life to the dead: O why persecutest thou me? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; the Saviour of others, the Saviour of thee." In one moment all the wrath of Saul of Tarsus was gone; all the fabric of self-righteousness which the Pharisee had been building up for a whole life-time, was struck to the ground for ever. One word, uttered by Jesus, came home to his heart; and did that which no circumstance in all his previous life had been able to do; and he had witnessed many things that we should have said had a tendency to soften him: we have already seen he witnessed the martyrdom of Stephen, when he was a young man, for "they laid down their clothes at the feet of a *young man*, whose name was Saul." A tenderness of spirit peculiarly befits the young; but he was a hard-hearted young man. He had heard without emotion, that dying prayer of the faithful martyr—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." He had seen portrayed on Stephen's countenance, that serene tranquillity, which swallowed up the agony of a cruel death. But he remained unmoved until the splendour of the heavenly vision, to which he could not be disobedient, changed the whole complexion of his life, and consecrated him at once to the service of the Son of God.

This, then, is the summary of this interesting story. His heart is changed; "behold he prayeth." The man is no longer dead in trespasses and sins. He breathes; breath is the sign of life: he prays; prayer is the sign of conversion: and he has consecrated in that prayer the remainder of that life to the service of that Redeemer whose disciples he had been so cruelly persecuting. Faith now takes that place in his heart which was formerly filled by unbelief; and love succeeds to rage and malice. The lion is turned into the lamb, and the little child may lead him. The persecutor becomes the Apostle; he is straitway in the synagogue; and he who not more than three days before, he who within the short period of less than a week, was a remorseless destroyer of the faith, appears now the most unwearied and intrepid advocate of it.



consciousness that it rests with others as well as himself, to determine his share in the glorious things which God has provided for the faithful. Yea, well might he, after resolving in the strength of the Lord to be more instant than ever "in season and out of season," and to give himself with a multiplied devotedness to the labours of his office. well might he come down into the midst of his people, as a suppliant for their aid, and beseech them with all the earnestness of one who has at stake what thought cannot measure, and shape his admonition and entreaty into the very form employed by St. John, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

I could not leave you, as I do this night, for that period of relaxation which mind and body annually demand, without setting before you the intimacy of that connexion which binds a minister and his people. I have acknowledged the dependence of the minister on his people; but not in such manner as to exonerate the minister from an unwearied fidelity, or to throw upon his people the blame of his deficiencies. I can only remind you that you have a great duty to perform towards your ministers, just as your ministers have to perform towards you; and that the failure on the one side, as well as on the other, will diminish mutually our recompense in eternity. O I do implore you to observe, that you cannot diminish his, and leave your own unimpaired. It is no mere selfish entreaty, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought." In wishing a full reward for ourselves, we wish it for you: in exhorting you to diligence in securing it for us, we exhort you to diligence in securing it for yourselves. We are closely bound together; our interests are one: and O that on both sides we may be more and more animated with the hope of that inheritance which fadeth not away! O that a noble ambition—the ambition of being first in the kingdom of heaven, may glow more rigorously and vehemently within us, and move us to greater steadfastness in the good fight of faith!

We are to part for a season; and when we meet again, I trust that we may aid one the other more than ever in running the race that is set before us. And if it be for the last time that we see each other in the flesh—for how many funerals may be gathered into a few weeks!—God grant that those who go to judgment, and those who remain behind, may be privileged to meet in another life, with no misgivings, that, by their neglecting to pray one for another while separated, they may have prevented the fulness of reward.

## THE CHARACTER OF GOD AS A FATHER.

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But it seemeth to my mind somewhat out of place, by rebuke to plead for a father's sacred rights, or with strong language to win back the affections of an erring child. Therefore, as upon earth the voice of forgotten duty is not re-awakened in the breast of a froward child by bitter upbraidings or sentences of judgment; but by the melting memory of parental acts, and the knowledge of a parent's longing, loving, and desiring soul: so on this, the first Sabbath-morning of a new year, when we should have on our minds the memory of his goodness, without addressing myself to any fears, I shall endeavour, by the recital of your Father's goodness and love, by the high obligations of your birth, of your bountiful upbringing in the house of his providence, and hereafter by the largesses of his grace and stored treasures of his glory—by these I shall endeavour to move within your minds, that love of God and that affectionate use of his name, "Our Father," which slumbereth in all, and in many of us is well nigh dead. And while I do so endeavour, may the Spirit bear witness with our spirits that we are the children of God; and may we receive the spirit of adoption whereby we may cry, 'Abba, Father.'

"Then, men and brethren, I pray you, look to the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged. Take up a handful of dust and ashes, and there behold the materials out of which the Lord God Almighty fashioned man—this living form of man, so quick and pregnant with all sensual and spiritual feeling. And if you would know the kindness which your Father hath put forth in the work of his hands, look to the tribes, from the worm to the lion, all made of as good materials, and many of them of better materials; in size, strength, fleetness, and durability, surpassing man. But where is their counsel? where is their government? where is their knowledge? where is their religion? Which of them has any fellowship with God, or reasonable intercourse with one another? The other creatures are but the outward endowments of man's senses, to clothe, to feed, to lay the lusty shoulder to his burden, to carry him about, to watch over him in sleep, and to minister in other ways to his entertainment.

"And what is the earth whereon you tread, and which spreads its flowery carpet beneath your feet? And what are its various fruits with their varieties to sustain, to refresh, and to cherish human life—the corn, the wine, and the oil? And what the recurring seasons of divided time—the budding spring, the flowery summer, the joyful vintage, and the lusty harvest, and now the homely, well-provided winter? And what the cheerful outgoings of morn, and dewy eve, and balmy sleep, and blessed action? What are they all, I ask, but the sweet cradle, and the blessed condition, into which our Father hath brought us his children? Is there nothing fatherly in all this, in the costly preparation and gladsome welcoming of our coming, and in the motherly bosom of plentiful affection and food stored for us; and in the fruitful dwelling-places to the inheritance of which we are born? Is it nothing that the range of our mansion is to the starry heaven, and not cooped within the encumbrance of a

the very stones might cry out, and sound it in your hearing: I mean the case of those who murdered the Prince of Life, and the Lord of Glory. If *any* sin were unpardonable, we may surely think theirs was: if *any* transgressor deserved to be consigned to inexorable wrath and severest torments, these deserved it. They had not the shadow of an excuse for their crime—hardly a single circumstance to extenuate it. They had been well acquainted with the exemplary conversation of Jesus of Nazareth: they had often heard his heavenly doctrines: they were almost daily witnesses of his miracles: they had, therefore, all possible reason to honour him as the most exalted of beings, and to receive his gospel as the most inestimable blessing. And yet they seized his person, dragged him before a heathen tribunal, and extorted a sentence of death against him. Never was the vilest slave so cruelly treated, nor the most criminal malefactor so barbarously executed. The sun was confounded, the earth trembled, at the horrid sin; and we wonder much how the avenging lightning could have withheld its flashes. But behold the triumphant goodness of God: many even of these murderers obtained mercy; for at the subsequent descent of the Holy Ghost, they were convinced of their sin, wounded with penitential remorse, fled to the sanctuary of the cross, and received full, free, and eternal pardon; and now are shining in the kingdom of heaven as so many everlasting monuments of mercy, and are receiving of blessedness past utterance from that very Redeemer whom once, with wicked hands, they crucified and slew. Well, then, might the prophet cry out in rapturous amazement—"Who is a God like unto thee, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin!" Truly it may be said that He "keepeth mercy for thousands;" that his mercy is "from everlasting to everlasting;" that it is "higher than the heavens"—yea, more extensive than the dimension of the skies.

Now, let me request you to consider, for a moment, your own condition, lest you be overwhelmed with much despair on account of your sin. Lift up your eyes to the azure canopy hanging over your heads, embroidered with sparkling stars, spacious enough to form a covering for unnumbered worlds. Where does it begin? Where does it end? What is its extent? "O," say you, "we cannot answer these questions." Then carry the questions to angels; they are perpetually traversing its immense circuit; and yet even angels cannot measure the bounds of space, because space is boundless and unknown. What then shall we say of the mercy of God, which is greater than the heavens, which pardons crimes the most atrocious with perfect freeness; because of the Redeemer's mediation; yea, pardons them more completely, if possible, than the wide-spread arch of heaven covers within its circle the ridge of mountains, or even a single grain of sand. Let all flesh know assuredly, and rejoice, that with the Lord there is such mercy, and with Christ such plentiful redemption. O for the voice of an archangel to circulate the glad tidings throughout the world, that, through the infinite mediation of the adorable Redeemer, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.

If these things be so, brethren, let me, in conclusion, address to you a few words, that seem to spring out of the whole subject.

The first remark will apply to those who have experienced the long-suffering of the Lord, and can, in some humble degree, take the language of the text as

their own: "For this cause, I," a worthless, helpless, ruined sinner, "obtained mercy, that in me," added to the other instances of long-suffering, "Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe." O how this text calls upon you to renew your vows! It bids you to remember where you were, and what you were, when you obtained mercy. "Hearken unto me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord; look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged." Retrace in your memory the circumstances of your conversion to God. The book of your personal history ought to be a book of easy reference; and you ought to be able, if you are living a life of thanksgiving to God, to be able to turn to that page of the book without difficulty. Open, then, the volume of your life: turn back till you come to the rise of religion in your own soul. Call to mind the deadness of your heart, when you came to church, and heard as though you heard not; when you used the words "miserable sinners," but never felt that you were a miserable sinner, though you confessed you were a lost and miserable sinner, and that you must be saved, if saved at all, by the mercy of Christ. Compare your lot then with your state now, when the words which you utter are the out-bursting of a broken and contrite heart. Recollect how the Lord found you, when, perhaps, like Saul, you were not seeking him—when you were hurrying on from crime to crime, and you were arrested, you could not tell how nor why. O now you recollect who it was arrested you, brought you by a way that you knew not, led you in paths that you had not known, and made darkness light before you, and crooked things straight. These things he has done unto you, and he has not since forsaken you; notwithstanding your many provocations, he has been constantly doing you good; he still bears with you, still treats you with kindness, still designs your everlasting happiness; he has hedged you about, and you cannot escape the arms of his everlasting covenant, for it is "ordered in all things, and sure."

There is a second lesson I am anxious to inculcate: No man can be saved but upon the principle of mercy. There are but two ways—the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace—in which you can be saved. The covenant of works is the principle of merit; the covenant of grace is the principle of mercy. You say, "Are we not saved on the principle of merit?" Yes, you are; but the merit of another, not your own. There are many Pharisees, formalists, and others, who will say that they are expecting mercy on the principle of merit. The Saviour (they say) has certainly infinite merit, but something is to be added by them, which is to qualify them to receive the abundant merit of Christ. Now, which of these principles do you receive—the principle of merit, or the principle of mercy? Be assured of this, the principle of merit will not do, because the law of God is the most unrelenting law: I mean by that, it must have perfect obedience, it must have perfect payment: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the law to do them:" "If a man offend in one point, he is guilty of all." The law of God must be like the nature of God—perfect: the nature of God is perfect and immutable; so is the law of God; it must be perfect as his nature. Then if you are thinking to go to heaven on your own self-righteousness, and are imagining that your respectability of character will weigh at all in the scale of your acceptance, let me remind you what the character of St. Paul was



thus invests him with the inheritance that he has purchased. The doctrine to be established is this: That we are to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom only it belongs, to introduce us to an actual participation of his grace. By his obedience unto death the Lord Jesus had made atonement, and established an infinite claim upon God for whatever his people can require at his hand. It is now our object to consider how, in his character of Saviour, he brings the soul within the pale of the covenant, and confers upon it all the blessings contained in it. For, as we learn from St. Paul, it is "by Christ" that we "have access unto the grace wherein we stand;" and as we learn from St. Peter, Christ "suffered the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God." The end of what the Lord Jesus did and suffered, when actually realized in any case, is to make the soul God's temple. Now we ask, How does Christ apply to any soul what he has purchased and treasured up? We answer, in three ways. First, by the power of his resurrection; secondly, by the prevalence of his intercession; and, thirdly, by the efficacy of the Holy Ghost: and we purpose considering the two former points in this discourse.

In the first place, then, Christ Jesus made good his work, so as to render it available to those for whom he lived and died, by HIS RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. It was this which rendered all that had been done effectual: this invested Christ with power to apply the merits of his life and passion to those whom he redeemed. The *resurrection* of the Lord Jesus Christ is in one sense more important than his *death*; for it was this which stamped the value upon his death, and rendered it available to the salvation of mankind. In Christ's resurrection we have evidence of our own: as the Apostle Paul speaks: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Had Christ not risen, nothing that he did or suffered could be profitable to us at all; the devil would have triumphed over him in the very act that was intended to thwart and crush that wretched tempter. And so doubtless he, the father of all mischief, when by the treachery of Judas he had brought the Saviour to the cross, and with hellish malice had seen him expire thereon, and by his satellites had set a seat and a ward upon the rock in which he was imprisoned—doubtless he thought that he had obtained his object, that he had again triumphed over us in our Substitute, even Jesus; and that the tomb had sepulchred for ever the humanity of Christ. And had he done so, of course he would have crushed our redemption in its birth, and as effectually have spoiled us of our hopes, and rivetted his fetters upon us for ever, as if he had stifled the incarnate Saviour in the virgin's womb, or obtained the mastery over him in the deadly conflicts of the wilderness and the garden. And then would it have profited us nothing that the Surety had carried his enterprize so far, that no sin had ever sullied his perfected obedience, and that in his death he had rendered an inestimable sacrifice, had the Lord Jesus not presented himself in the heavenly courts to avow his victory and to claim his reward. And in this conviction, when enforcing the doctrine which he knew to be the main-spring of Christian hope, the Apostle avows, "If Christ be not risen from the dead your faith is in vain, ye are yet in your sins." It had profited us nothing that we could point to the cross, could we not also point to the resurrection: to point to the

tomb in which they laid the crucified Jesus, could we not also point to the orifice through which he broke ; for it was the risen Lord who perfected what the crucified Lord had accomplished.

And thus we find, that all the parts of our redemption from sin and hell are ascribed to the power of Christ's resurrection ; whether we regard our justification, or our regeneration, or our fellowship with God in worship and in service.

For instance ; if we allude to our *justification*, to our judicial acceptance and acquittal with God, we shall find the Apostle states, that " Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." You are told that you are to look for your justification, not so much to the death as to the resurrection of Jesus : not, as though we were not justified by Christ's death as the meritorious cause, but that it was by Christ's rising that he received power to apply to us the blood of atonement. For it was by his resurrection that the Lord Jesus was justified himself. Thus we read, " God justified in the Spirit." And the expression is explained in another passage, in which it is said, that Christ was " declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, and by his resurrection from the dead."

Now how was the Lord Jesus justified ? He never was an evil doer, and he knew no sin : but as the Surety for man he laid beneath a load of guilt imputed, and then died : and when he rose he was clear of all that guilt imputed. And herein was Christ's justification the proof and the pledge of both. For if his resurrection was the evidence when he appeared as a substitute, then, of course, those for whom he died and rose are also free. And his resurrection was a broad avowal, in the face of the universe, that Satan had no claim to urge against any one for whom he died and rose again. It demonstrated that justice was truly satisfied, that the debt was fully paid ; that the everlasting righteousness, for the justification of penitent and believing sinners, was brought in, and that they are justified in this their Surety's justification. So that if the believer, in a moment of dejection, is ever tempted to distrust the foundation upon which he rests, he has only to revert to the resurrection of his Lord ; for this will furnish an infallible evidence, that the righteousness to which the gates of heaven were unfolded is a sufficient covering for all our sins.

Then, secondly, the resurrection of Christ is effectual to the *regeneration*, as well as to the justification of his people. We find that Christ's resurrection is designated as his " birth," or his " beginning." As we read in Acts, xix. in which St. Paul explains the expression in the second Psalm, " Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee," as having reference to our Saviour's resurrection from the dead. The Lord Jesus was indeed begotten from eternity, in the first simultaneous burst of love ; but still there was a sense in which he was begotten when he was declared to be the Son of God with power, by his triumph over death. In like manner is the second birth of his people ascribed to the same glorious event. " Blessed," saith St. Peter, " be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." And thus in Romans, vi. we are said to be " raised to newness of life," by virtue of Christ's resurrection ; to be " risen with Christ ;" to be " raised up together with Christ : " expressions all implying our quickening into a new and spiritual life by the virtue of Christ's resurrection.

## RESTRAINING PRAYER BEFORE GOD.

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REV. J. PARSONS.

POULTRY CHAPEL, JANUARY 27, 1835\*.

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"Thou restrainest prayer before God."—JOB, xv. 4.

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THE principle of this address, my brethren, is clearly one of a most grave and serious order; and although by some it might be treated with perfect unconcern and indifference, yet it could not be heard by a mind possessing aught of spiritual susceptibility, except with terror and alarm. It was, as you perceive by the connexion, the charge of Eliphaz against Job, at a time when the patriarch was sunk under the pressure of deep and peculiar afflictions, and when he gave way to despondency of soul. As it was applied to him by his visitor, it probably may be considered as unnecessarily harsh and severe, and not borne out and justified by facts: although it will also be perceived, that the expressions of the sufferer exposed him to some imputation of blame. But whatever might be the ground of the original appropriation of the reproof, it is not to be doubted, that many now exist in the world against whom, with perfect equity, it may be alleged; and there are many (and perhaps not a few who are now in this assembly), who have reason to be startled and to be humbled, because they are guilty of restraining prayer before God.

Any explanation, my brethren, of the immediate connexion of the text, after the brief remarks which have already been made, probably will not be required. It is intended, therefore, at once to proceed to illustrate it, in such a manner as to embrace those general principles which it properly suggests, and which must be regarded as of high importance to the interests and the well-being of all men. The presentation of those principles cannot but be regarded as eminently appropriate to the specific occasion which has now assembled us in the house of God; because their recognition and their just application are evidently essential to the success of this, and of all other institutions, which are now imploring the charity and receiving the support of the enlightened and Christian world. But, my brethren, I do not affect to conceal at the outset, that the great object which I have in view is, to enforce those general principles upon you as being individually responsible, and being individually immortal. Those amongst you whose spirits heretofore may have been the most elevated, will, I trust, find additional reason for continued watchfulness and care: and those who are now present, and by whom the guilt noticed in the text has in any manner been contracted, will, I trust, under God, receive such an impulse, as will lead them on to pardon and salvation.

\* On behalf of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society.

We have to request your patient and devout attention, while we notice, in the first place, the employment, the importance of which is assumed; secondly, the habit, the indulgence of which is charged; and, thirdly, the evils, the infliction of which is threatened. All these are rightly involved in the expression, "Yea, thou restrainest prayer before God."

First, we shall proceed to notice from these words, **THE EMPLOYMENT, THE IMPORTANCE OF WHICH IS ASSUMED.** It is, as you will perceive, the employment of prayer.

Prayer, as we need scarcely explain, is an application made by an inferior being to one who is superior, for the communication of a good, which it would benefit the one to receive, and which the other is able to bestow. He who prays must be conscious of his personal imperfection and personal wants; he must be anxious to have those imperfections supplied, and those wants relieved; and he must exercise a just confidence, that the Being to whom he addresses himself, is actually possessed of the knowledge, and the power, and the willingness, essential to procure the impartation of the blessing desired. All these emotions, my brethren, are essential to constitute prayer; where these are not, there may, indeed, be the form of prayer, there may be the name of prayer, there may be the attitude of prayer, and there may be the external appearance of prayer; but the thing itself is absent: and he who professes to use it, is just as far from it as if the very first syllables of religion were unknown, and as if he were engaged in those employments from which religion is at the utmost possible distance of separation.

Now it must be observed more particularly, that *the end and object of all prayer is God.* This you will perceive to be clearly implied in the expression of the text; as we read "prayer before," or "unto," "God." You are doubtless prepared to remember, that God is alone adequately possessed of the various attributes to which we refer, as those essential to justify and to claim the offering of supplication to him. We have, for example, referred to *knowledge*; and he searcheth the hearts and he trieth the reins; there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight; "all things are naked and open in the eyes of Him with whom we have to do:" he is a God of knowledge. We have referred to *power*; and "he doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth; none can stay his hand, or say to him, What doest thou?" He speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast. He is the Lord God Omnipotent. We have referred again to *willingness*; and his kindness is infinite, he waiteth to be gracious: he is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. These attributes of Jehovah must be regarded as in themselves commending and sealing his claim upon the supplications of all mankind. And in the volume of inspired truth, as you cannot but be aware, there are distinct and direct assertions of that claim, the most decisive and solemn which language can possibly supply. To address in prayer other beings, while there exists such a one as Jehovah, constitutes a folly and a guilt at once palpable and enormous; guilt which can only terminate in the infliction of his direst curses. And it cannot but be advantageous for us ever to remember, in regard to the importance of prayer, his own vindication of his own exclusive majesty: "I am Jehovah, that is my name; and I will not give my glory unto another."

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linked his divinity to human nature. We read in Psalm ii. of "the decree" by which the world he had formed was to be subject to his power. Christ was to be a king, enthroned upon his holy hill of Zion, and hence he was to exercise his sway over his subjects. But he was to obtain them in the way of intercession: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." King though he was, yet, at his Father's command, by intercession on the ground of his conquest over death, and sin, and hell, was Christ to obtain his subjects. And therefore, when any one is willing to submit himself to Christ's sway, and to own him as his Lord and Saviour, he may derive comfort from believing that he has been given to Christ in answer to his own request, and that he is willing to receive Christ because he has been made so in the day of Christ's power.

Then again, Christ lives as an Intercessor, *to secure to those he loves the possession of the graces and glory he has purchased by his blood.* He commits their cause not into their hands, but retains it in his own, and acts as the administrator of the testament which at death he bequeathed. Is there any gift or grace which any of his people stand in need of? As the purchase of his blood Christ claims it at the Father's hand, and himself bestows it upon his waiting people. And the doctrine is to bring us to his footstool, in anxious and believing expectation. What good thing do any of us stand in need of? It is Christ who will give it, in virtue of his intercession: he has already asked and secured it for us: and should we not apply for it, and expect it at his hand? On the ground of what Christ has asked and has obtained, the language of invitation is addressed to every one of us, "Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find." "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." For Christ lives and intercedes with the Father, that he may execute his own will and testament, that whatever he bequeathed at his death for those for whom he lived and died, they may receive. He lives to execute what he died to enforce.

Then, lastly, Christ lives as an Intercessor *to maintain his people's cause,* and to answer the indictments which may be preferred against them before the supreme judicature of the Almighty. Many are the accusations brought against Christ's people before that high tribunal, for not one of which they themselves could render an excuse. For there is the great Accuser of the brethren preferring perpetual allegations: carrying his records of every sin and every frailty, and pleading hard for a verdict against them. And there is an inexorable enemy arraigning us for every idle word and every wayward wish, and every obliquity of thought or deed. And there is conscience, with all the light which Gospel truth has given it into the evil of sin, perpetually arraigning us of high treason against our acknowledged King and Head. And we can have no excuse to urge in arrest of judgment, but ourselves must needs stand convicted. And therefore, were it not for one who will appear as Advocate, and take upon him to answer for us, and to quash all these indictments, it is clear that they would sink the very holiest person amongst us to the lowest hell. But Christ stands at the **right hand of severe justice**, and to quash the allegations as they are preferred. "For if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins." He speaks not only to the general indictment, but to every single plea as it arises. Daily and hourly does Christ appeal, when ever and anon as they are overtaken with a fault. the great accuser spreads his dragon wings, and flies

to inform against us, and endeavour to cast us out of favour with our God : but there to meet and discomfit Satan stands Jesus as the Lamb that has been slain, the accredited advocate and agent of his people ; and at each charge he meekly points to his crimson wounds, and to the snowy vesture he wrought out to cover our sins : and his plea is accepted, and the Accuser of the brethren driven away foiled, and a verdict of acquittal pronounced amidst the plaudits of the angelic auditory.

Now I need not urge that both the argument of Christ's resurrection as attesting the completion and acceptance of his work as Mediator, and the argument of Christ's intercession as exhibiting his watchful advocacy on our behalf, suggest appeals for grateful confidence in Christ. They shew how his work as Surety is brought to bear upon the exigences of his people ; how what he did and suffered are made available to their salvation ; and how ready and effectual is the help which he is empowered and willing to bestow.

In conclusion, I would ask, how far we have reason for thinking that we are interested in the fruits of Christ's resurrection, and are the subjects of his prevailing advocacy ? Do we feel that there is an inward witness which testifies to our fellowship with Christ as they who have been quickened, justified, and regenerated, and in some measure sanctified with him ? Can we call Christ Lord, and King, and Saviour, God our heavenly Father, the Spirit our guide, and appeal to the testimony of the last mentioned witness in proof that we are risen with Christ from sin, and desire to seek those things which are above ? Are our hearts conversant with the scenes where Jesus this day reposes his glorified humanity ? If we had the wings of the dove, would we speed away to the shadows of his throne, and the refuge of his bosom ? Do we desire to be found in Christ, to be associated with him in holiness, as well as in glory ? Are we willing that sin should be mortified in our mortal bodies, that we may escape its blandishments and its transitory joys, as well as its sting and its punishment ? Is it our wish in life and in death to be only the Lord's ? If so, we are to look above in hope ; for there dwells that risen form which is the pledge of our own resurrection and life ; there intercedes that prevailing Advocate whose appeal never was neglected, and who is this day urging appeals on our behalf. Our cause is in the hands of one who shall not fail, one who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax, who will yet bring forth judgment unto truth. And, remember, brethren, that he intercedes for grace that sanctifies, as well as for grace that pardons and accepts you ; that your sanctification is a plea with Christ to-day, that the gifts for which he asks he is himself both able and willing to bestow.

Therefore let your expectations keep pace with your wishes, and let your prayers go hand in hand with your hopes. The more you wish for, the more you may expect ; the more you expect, the more you should pray. Let your expectations be based upon Christ's promises and sufficiency, and your prayers be inflamed by Christ's intercession. Because you need great things, expect great things ; and because you are encouraged to expect great things, be sure to ask for them. You are to pray because Christ prays. And when you have infinite love, seconded by infinite power, and backed by infinite faithfulness what is there that you are not warranted to expect ? May God bless his word  
Amen.

judgments." Again: "Seven times a day"—not involving the particular and precise number, seven; but using the term as the mystic figure for continuity and frequency—"seven times a day do I praise thee." You may refer again to the well-known case of Daniel, with regard to whom we are informed, that his adversaries could find nothing against him, excepting with regard to the law of his God; and knowing his habits of prayer, they caused the passing of an edict, that no man was to offer a prayer for the space of thirty days, except to the king of Persia. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God."

But without referring you, as we might, at large to the example of prophets and apostles, turn to the history of that Jesus, who became incarnate in human nature, not merely as our sacrifice, but as our example. He was emphatically a man of prayer; and prayer constituted the grand resort and the one chosen refuge of his soul; that by its energy he might be fully prepared for the work that was given him to do.

Assigning, my brethren, to these various considerations their just and legitimate weight, it will then be perceived at once, that all persons who engage in the holy employment of supplication but fitfully, and occasionally, and at infrequent and distant intervals of time, are substantially guilty of dishonouring and restraining it before God. The various reasons which are alleged for infrequent exercise in this vocation, are all impertinent, frivolous, and inadmissible. Let them be examined impartially, as they are presented by men in various forms; and it will always be discovered ultimately that they proceed, and that they arise, from the indisposition of the mind to prayer; so that whatever may be alleged in apology, does only seal and aggravate the guilt. In the case, my hearers, of your own personal inattention (and I speak to none who would not plead before God guilty to the charge of inattention), I am persuaded, that strict integrity will compel you to acknowledge the insincerity of any palliating or extenuating plea; and to confess, that your neglect in this matter has arisen because the likings of your passions have been at the time elsewhere than in communion with God and at the throne of grace. I beseech you, my friends, do not strive to deceive yourselves; strive not to deceive your fellow men; strive not, especially, to deceive that God who searcheth the heart, and who declares that he will not be mocked. Remember that his command is paramount; and that, whatever else be overlooked and forgotten, he will have no neglect and no avoidance in prayer.

Thirdly, he is guilty of restraining prayer before God, *who excludes from his supplications the matters which are properly the objects of prayer.* Surely, my brethren, the exclusion of those matters in the exercise of this holy employment which God has oft-times commanded, must properly come within the range and circuit of the allegation now before us. Whilst the exclusiveness of a spirit of narrowness and contraction are most solemnly and deeply to be deprecated and condemned, permit me just to mention some of those various objects which men are apt to exclude in their professed devotions, and in the exclusion of which we affirm and aver that there is sin



There is, for instance, the exclusion of petitions for those spiritual blessings, which are specially required by our own personal, besetting weaknesses and sins. Now these, in consequence of the want of self-examination, or vanity, or pride, we do not adequately acknowledge. There is the exclusion of petitions for the well-being of our families, our partners, our parents, our children, our brethren, and others, who are bound to us by the associations of kindred and of love. There is again the exclusion of petitions for the interests of those whom we call our friends, and who, though not partakers of our kindred and our blood, are yet bound to us by the ties of voluntary engagement and regard. There is the exclusion of petitions on behalf of the house of God where we are accustomed to assemble and to worship: for its pastor, that he may be rendered, and continue an example to the flock; that he may be enabled to declare faithfully the whole counsel of God, and may be the means of saving many souls; for its saints, that they may adorn the doctrine of their Saviour in all things, and shine as lights in the world; for his unconverted hearers, that they may become pricked in their hearts, and, through the energy of the truth of God, may have their eyes opened, and be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto himself. There is the exclusion of petitions for the church generally; that they may be united in the spirit of love, and in the spirit of holiness, and in the spirit of light; and that, walking in the fear of the Lord, they may possess the comforts of the Lord, and be greatly multiplied. There is the exclusion of petitions for the unconverted world; that the means which are set in operation by your individual exertions, or public institutions, may be blessed by Him to whom belongs the residue of the Spirit; that great and effectual doors may every where be opened, and that the power of the truth of the gospel may take its flight from realm to realm, and from continent to continent, until the end shall come, when shall be heard the reverberation of the seventh angel's trumpet, and when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of God, and of his Christ, that he may reign for ever and for ever.

Now, my dear hearers, whenever there is the habitual neglect, or the cold and the occasional remembrance of any of the various interests to which we have referred, there is really the guilt of restraining prayer before God. You who are numbered among the professing people of the Lord Jesus Christ, have probably, in not a few instances, to confess your own forgetfulness, your own cold and imperfect remembrance. You have been swallowed up too much in the contemplation of self; you have cherished too little of charity and benevolence for the perishing world in which you live; you have too seldom looked beyond the narrow enclosure of your own families upon the broad and desolate waste which is lying scathed and blasted around you. You are, therefore, called upon, my hearers, to cultivate the high employment by which you may be enabled to correct, and reform; determined to carry all the interests of your families, your ministers, your fellow saints, and the unconverted world, habitually, and regularly, and earnestly, before the throne of the heavenly grace, and to see whether God will not command his blessing out of Zion, even life for ever more.

But, fourthly, it will be observed, he restrains prayer before God, *who does not cherish the spirit of importunity in prayer*. Importunity, or intense earnestness, is an attribute essentially appertaining to the exercise of suppli-

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the motto of your great Redeemer—"I delight to do thy will, O God." Such is the spirit which Christianity naturally recognizes. We therefore entreat you, with respect to the divine commandment, to "do all things without murmuring;" to obey the injunction which has been offered, if there be any thing in it adapted to you, either in the claims of gratitude, the honour of religion, or in the prospect of heaven.

You will observe again, there is in these words an example as to *the spirit which Christians are to cherish towards other men*. While they are to "do all things without murmuring," or to obey with evangelical readiness the moral commandments of God, they are to "do all things *without disputings*." They are not to permit the sphere of their duties to be interfered with by the spirit of contention, and quarrels with other men, especially with those who call upon "the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours." The spirit of contention and discord, as many are too practically aware, is in itself most pernicious alike to the individual and the public interests of the truth, as the history of the Gospel can present a mournful record. And for this reason it is condemned in the institutes of Christianity, in a manner that is perfectly conclusive and overwhelming. Take such examples, as testimonies against disputings and discords, as are to be found in the following exhortations: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Again: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." "For if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children; and walk in love." "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves." Such, my brethren, are the oracles of that religion which emanated from the breast of Infinite Benevolence, and which is, by means of this peculiar distinction, the glory of religion, of peace, and of love.

Professing Christians, there is reason to fear, in our own day, render but a very inadequate and imperfect compliance with the exhortation which is now before us, to do all things without disputings. Oftentimes is there a grievous want of harmony in those who constitute the same community; and oftentimes do men fail in their performance of those high and imperative obligations imposed on them by God, to indulge in a spirit of wrath and revenge among their brethren. Amongst the various denominations, also, in which the Christian Church is at present divided, there is the exhibition of an angry spirit of controversy and bitterness, with respect to which no feeling of reprehension can be too strong, and no language of regret can be too pungent, hostile as it is to the Gospel, and destructive as it is of the true welfare of our common faith.

The reasons, my hearers, are cogent, indeed, on every hand, for unity. I would charge you, that in your own individual communities, you would pray, and

more carefully watch over, your own tempers and deportments; that you would endeavour to abound in love more and more, and that you would have one only strife, and that, too, strife of friendship and peace, who can become most eminent in "the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." And I would charge you, with reference to the various denominations that are around you, that while, as occasion may require, you maintain with firmness the principles to which you are conscientiously attached, you will leave it to others, for them if they will, to misrepresent, to vituperate, and to denounce; but for yourselves to cherish that "charity which suffereth long and is kind," which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things." Thus, my hearers, shall we hold a high and a noble course, which will give rapture, and ecstasy, and delight, to Him whose very name and nature is love. O that he would pour out the Spirit of love upon the whole and every part of his universal church, thus to qualify it for his final triumph over the unconverted world, and then for its translation into that high and palmy state of being,

"Where joy, like morning dew, distils,  
And all the air is love."

You will observe, further, that in the words of the text there is an exhortation as to *the spirit which Christians are to cherish in relation to the public interests and the extension of the truth*. While they are to "do all things without murmurings and disputings," they are to "shine"—for we consider this phrase to be taken not indicatively, but imperatively—they are to "shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life." The "word," my brethren, which here is noticed, is the revelation which God has granted of his mercy in the gospel of his Son; and which when applied by the agency of his Spirit to the human soul, prepares it for the full enjoyment of everlasting life, for pardon and eternal salvation. Now this "word" it is the bounden duty of all Christians to hold forth, or display, to persons who are yet unaffected by it; and this not merely by the example of their own personal holiness, but also by the administration of those direct instructions, which are intended to affect the conscience and the heart, turning men "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." This we conceive to be the imperative law imposed upon all those who have been born again.

It has, you are aware, been imagined, and is imagined now by not a few, that the advocacy of the truth of the Gospel, for the purpose of diffusing it in the world, must be regarded as properly the work of those dedicated professionally to the ministry of the Gospel; and that it does not by any means extend to those persons who occupy the more ordinary and the more retired stations of life. This notion requires, upon every possible occasion, to receive the fullest possible confutation. It may be confuted by the very spirit of the exhortation which is now brought before us. We see, you observe, on turning to the commencement of the epistle, that it is addressed "To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi," along "with the bishops and deacons." It may be also confuted by referring to the example of the whole primitive church, which, as we find from the records of the Acts of the Apostles and various parts of the epistles, presented one mass of activity on behalf of the interests of the truth. It may be confuted especially by reminding you of those grand princi-

*communication of spiritual blessings.* Prayer is the only medium through which the blessings of Jehovah can descend upon men, and the globe on which we live. You will remember that on one occasion, (I refer now to the record contained in Ezekiel, xxxvi.) God had announced, with absolute and unconditional firmness, a series of promises, about to be performed in connexion with the destinies of his people; and he says, "I, the Lord, have spoken it, and I will do it." But then, mark what follows this unconditional and solemn promise: "Thus saith the Lord God; I will for this, yet be inquired of"—or prayed to—"by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock." And every passage to which I have referred to-night, and which it will not be needful for us to repeat now, will just remind us of the invariable principle, that it is as men ask that they receive, as they seek that they find, and as they knock that it is opened unto them. "We have not, because we ask not. We ask, and receive not, because we ask amiss."

With regard to ourselves, my brethren, the habit of restraining prayer unquestionably has prevented many, and does prevent many now, the possession of spiritual blessings to their souls. It is for this that in affliction we are not consoled; it is for this that in perplexity we are not guided; it is for this that in temptation we are not protected; it is for this that we are dwarfish when we might have been gigantic; it is for this that we are barren, when we might have been filled with the fruits of righteousness; it is for this that we lie prostrate at the base, when we might be erect on the summit; it is for this that we are degraded, when we might have been exalted and ennobled; it is for this that we exist now as beggars and paupers, when we might be enriched and filled with all the fulness of God.

And, my brethren, with regard to the well-being of others, the same habit on the part of the professing Church, has, undoubtedly, prevented the communication of spiritual blessings to them. I myself, protest most solemnly, as an individual minister of the Gospel, against that mode of speculation which has argued as to the reason why there has been such a scanty amount of blessings distributed upon the nations of the earth, and has finally taken to itself a repose by imputing it to the sovereignty of God. Why, my brethren, from any such speculations or conclusions as these, it becomes us, looking to the principle of man's obligation, to trace the want of benevolence and candour, in no secondary measure to the habit of restraining prayer before God. My brethren, we need not wonder, that as we have smitten only thrice and then stayed, that the arm of the Lord's deliverance has not put forth its utmost power. We need not wonder that, in our families, some who are the dearest to us according to the flesh, are yet alienated from the life of God, and bringing us down by their conduct with sorrow to the grave. We need not wonder, that, in the sanctuaries where we worship, the minister closes the Book, and descends from the pulpit, exclaiming with regard to so many, "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought." We need not wonder that our land of privilege, and of Bibles, and of freedom, is stained by crimes unutterable in their number and in aggravation. We need not wonder that antichrist, and the false prophet, and the man of sin, and the gigantic dominion of heathenism, hold the millions of our species beneath their worse than Egyptian bondage. We need not wonder, that there no light shines amid the darkness—that there no glory blazes amid the ruin—

that there no rose blossoms in the wild and desolate wilderness, and that multitudes of men at every moment of time (and ah, how many since this service commenced!) have felt the fulfilment of the catastrophe, crowding and rushing onward to the brink of the precipice, and there sinking, exclaiming each one as he is lost for ever, "No man cared for my soul."

It is, my hearers, in the name of a world whose miseries you would not prolong, and whose emancipation you would be instrumental in fulfilling, that we exhort you against the habit of restraining prayer before God. Let the Holy Spirit touch us as a pentecostal fire, pervading the heart of youth and the head of the aged, touching all ranks and classes of the servants of the Lord, like that visitation; and then new-born souls will "fly as a cloud," and "as doves into their windows;" then we shall have advance instead of imbecility, and revival instead of languor; and the Gospel will hold on its march of majesty until it shall reach the goal of universal dominion, and sway the sceptre of triumphant grace over a free and renovated world.

But again, this habit of restraining prayer before God, besides preventing the communication of spiritual blessings, *exposes positively to the judicial wrath of God*. My Christian friends, it is a solemn thought for us to know, that we, in our modified mode of restraining prayer, cannot by reason of that habit, however mitigated, escape the chastisement of his hand. If our immortal spirits are placed beyond the reach of danger—and if we, by the appointment of his own purposes, and the efficacy of the Redeemer's blood, and the sealing gift of the Spirit, are to be prevented from going down to the pit of eternal darkness—yet we must be content to suffer much of temporal chastisement and infliction, as the result of our habit of impropriety and imperfection and the practical result would be well, if oftentimes, instead of placing your afflictions to the account of the sovereignty or mastery of God's government, you would ascribe them to the just visitation which he fixes on you by reason of your restraining prayer before him, amongst other inconsistencies of the Christian life, when he visits their iniquities with a rod, and their transgressions with stripes: and thus, my hearers, with regard to those who are guilty of restraining prayer, in the more terrible extent we have opened before you, it will be remembered that there are inflictions which will press upon the soul, not in the partial judgments of time, but in the tremendous outpouring of all the vials of eternal punishment and ruin. I speak to men who have restrained prayer by omitting it altogether: and I tell them, as the great evil now impending over their condition, that if they live and die without the spirit of prayer, they will descend into a state of unchanging existence, where it will be found one of the worst and most agonizing torments, that they will pray, and pray *in vain*.

It is but seldom that the revelation of the Word of God, draws aside the curtain that conceals the habitation of lost spirits in hell; but there is one instance where that curtain is drawn aside; not by the hands of prophets or apostles, but by the hand of Him who was the Master of both: and he expounds, my brethren, the following awful fact for the warning and the alarm of others. A rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and who fared sumptuously every day, died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment. He saw Lazarus, a beggar he had once despised, in the bosom of



Abraham, in the Paradise of God. He prayed—and it was for *himself*. “Father Abraham, I beseech thee, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame:” and the poor request was denied. He prayed again—and it was for *others*: “I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment:” “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” “Nay, father Abraham”—as if rising to a maddening agony—“Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they *will* repent.” “Verily, I say unto thee, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.” It was denied—and the spirit was lost for ever. Ah, in this vast assembly, how many are to be found in danger of encountering the horrors of that world, of the inhabitants of which, it will be said, that they do pray *in vain*. You will go and stand before yonder judgment-seat, and cry and pray for mercy there; but the voice from the throne will proclaim, “It is too late!” The attendant angels will repeat, “It is too late!” Conscience will utter its melancholy whisper within, “It is too late!” The fiend will shout, in the arch mockery of hell, as he rushes to seize his victim in his grasp, “It is too late!” The spirit will shriek as it descends, “It is too late!” And the caverns of Tophet will re-echo and reverberate in ceaseless reiterations through eternity, “It is too late! It is too late!” Who can dwell with the devouring fire, or with the everlasting burnings? O then, my hearers, remember that you must not restrain prayer before God.

My brethren, we have now attempted to exhibit to you those general principles to which we have adverted, as legitimately to be deduced from the statement of this portion of the Word of God. We have reminded you that the employment of prayer is to be directed to God, as its only exclusive object; and that God has rendered it a matter of positive and universal obligation. We have reminded you, that he is guilty of restraining prayer before God, who altogether omits prayer—who engages but seldom in prayer—who excludes from supplication those matters which are properly the objects of prayer—and who does not cherish the spirit of importunity in prayer. And we have reminded you, that the habit of restraining prayer before him, cannot be indulged with impunity, that it prevents always the enjoyment of spiritual blessings both by ourselves and by others; and that it exposes especially to the judicial wrath of God.

I trust, my Christian brethren, to whom I would address myself once more in approaching the conclusion of our address, that the subject which has been dedicated to your welfare, will not be offered to you in vain; and as, without exception, shame and confusion of face belong to us, because, to some extent, at least, we have restrained prayer before God, that to-night we will renew our vows, and retire to our chambers, and there beseech God, as his best boon to us, to pour upon us the spirit of prayer; and resolve, my brethren, in the language of the prophet, that “for Zion’s sake we will not hold our peace,” in prayer—that “for Jerusalem’s sake we will not hold our peace,” in prayer, “until the righteousness thereof go forth as the brightness, and his salvation as a lamp that burneth.” No; we will take the censer that contains the blood of pro-

pitiation ; we will draw aside the veil that separates us from the holiest of all ; we will enter and stand in the presence of the shekinah, before the burning glory of Jehovah, and there sprinkling that blood upon the mercy-seat, and holding it before us that we die not, stand with an unwearied and with an unfainting, cry, "We will not, we will not, we will not let thee go except thou bless us;" waiting until, from that shrine and that pavilion of glory, the voice shall answer, "Ye have prevailed; as I live, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory; the mystery of God which he spake to his prophets, soon, soon shall be finished."

And yet, my hearers, there are many now present, who have no title to the character of Christians, and to whom I would dedicate another word of exhortation before I close. My hearers, I tremble to think, that I am now in the presence of a person who never prayed; a sinner born to die; a sinner whose breath is in his nostrils; a sinner who, by one stroke of his Judge, might be swept from probation to eternal doom. A sinner who never prayed! Where is he? Is it *you*—is it *you*—is it *you*, who never prayed? Suppose you were to stand forth; what a sight would it be! O sinner, we call upon you to pray *now*: go to the footstool, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Is it uttered? Then utter it again, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Is it repeated? Then repeat it again—"God be merciful to me a sinner." Saints, pray for the praying sinner—"God be merciful unto him a sinner." And the voice of united supplication will be heard; joy will be felt in the bosoms of the angels: a greater than the angels will look down, as he did upon Saul of Tarsus, and, with the ecstasy of a satisfied travail, will exclaim, "Behold he prayeth:" and the sigh of that sinner's petition will be heard; that sinner's transgressions shall be pardoned; that sinner's person shall be accepted; that sinner's soul shall be saved. Thus may God, by his Spirit, descend, and preserve us from the habit of restraining prayer before him. Amen.

## IRRELIGION OF SOCIETY.

THERE is as real, and certain, and determined a combination among men, to exclude God and his law from any actual control over human hearts, as if the standard of open rebellion was raised, and there were gathered around it all the demonstrations of physical resistance. It is sometimes said that the reason why subjects connected with God and religion are so excluded from conversation in polite circles of society, is the fact, that when such subjects are introduced, they are so often a cloak of hypocrisy and deceit. I know it is so, and this fact constitutes the most complete and overwhelming evidence of the extent to which this world is alienated from God. Even what little professed regard there is for him here, is two-thirds of it hypocrisy! This is, in fact, what the objection amounts to; and what a story does it tell in regard to the place which God holds in human hearts. No. As men have generally made up their minds to have nothing to do with God, they are determined to hear nothing about him, unless it be in such general terms, and in such formal ways, as shall not be in danger of making an impression. We may almost wonder how eternal justice can spare this earth from day to day, when we reflect upon what is unquestionably the awful fact, that throughout all those countries where the true God is known, in four cases out of five in which his name is mentioned at all, it is used in oaths and blasphemies.

The world has been full of religions, it is true; but they have been the schemes of designing men, to gain an ascendancy over the ignorant, by deceiving and bribing that conscience which God has placed in every heart to testify for him. It has been the studied aim of these religions to evade the obligation of moral law, and the authority of a pure, and holy, and spiritual Deity. They substitute for it empty rites and ceremonies, in order to divert the attention of the sentry which God has stationed in the soul, while all the unholy lusts and passions are left unrestrained. The Pharisees gave a specimen which will answer for all. Unjust and cruel towards men, unfaithful and unbelieving towards God, and habitually violating and trampling under foot the whole spirit of his law, they would go out into their gardens, and carefully take one tenth of every little herb which grew there; and this they would carry with ridiculous solemnity, to the Temple of God, to show their exact observance of his commands! This is an admirable example of the spirit and nature of all false religions. Men will do any thing else but really give themselves up to God. They will go barefooted to Jerusalem, for the sake of being sainted on their return: they will fight under the crescent for plunder or military renown; they will build churches and contribute money to public charities, from a hundred different motives; but as to coming and really believing all that God has said, and giving up the whole soul to him, entering his service, and looking forward habitually to heaven as their home, *they will not do it*. It has been proposed to them again and again, in every variety of mode, and **THEY WILL NOT DO IT**. The prophets proposed it:—men stoned them. Jesus Christ proposed it:—they crucified him. The apostles and their immediate successors proposed it:—in the course of a very few generations they succeeded in bribing them, by means of worldly rewards and honours, to pervert their message, and leave the world undisturbed in its sins.—ABBOTT.

## THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST.

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ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW, DECEMBER 25, 1834.

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And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them : and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not : for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you ; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God."—LUKE, ii. 8—13.

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SEVEN hundred and fifty years before our Lord came into this world, was his birth predicted by the Prophet Isaiah, in those remarkable terms which we have heard this day. In that chapter of his prophecy he announced, that God would cause Israel to rejoice, as when men divide the spoil ; that he would break the yoke of the oppressor from off the shoulders of his people. And this was to be effected by the coming of the Saviour, whose birth was predicted in these terms : " For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given : and the government shall be upon his shoulders : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with justice and with judgment from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." According to this prediction the Saviour was expected to be divine as well as human ; that, from the time of his ministry upon earth, he would be seated upon a throne, of which David's was to be a type, the real and spiritual King of his people ; and that his government in the hearts and minds of his people, should from that time continually increase, until at length the world should be under his dominion. And as this was beyond what man might expect as the result of any natural circumstances, it must be the accomplishment of almighty power : " The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

When our Saviour actually came " in the fulness of time," there was much that would seem to contradict those magnificent expectations, which, from some passages of the Old Testament, we might be led to form respecting his appearance upon earth. And yet at the same time, lowly as he was when he came down, he was not destitute of those manifestations of the divine approbation of his own divine glory which might confirm their faith. In fact, the humbler circumstances of our Saviour's ministry, as well as the more remarkable indi-



cations of divine power and glory, were predicted in the Old Testament: and the more remarkably, in combination, served to convince of that truth, that Jesus is the promised Saviour.

The passage we are called to contemplate illustrates these circumstances. It shews our Lord's glory when upon earth; and at the same time his lowliness. The first point to which our attention is called, is, *the persons to whom his birth was made known*: "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." It did not please the Almighty to make the birth of the Saviour thus divinely known to the High Priest, who was at the head of the religious ceremonials of his country, by whose influence and authority the prejudices of the Jewish nation might be consulted, and, apparently, numbers brought to believe on him: it did not please him to come in divine splendour, that he might have exchanged his opposition for homage, and have forborne to persecute the Lord's anointed. Nor was it made known to Cesar, through whose imperial support numbers in every land might have been brought to acknowledge that this was the promised Saviour. But it was made known to a few lowly and simple-minded men, who were "keeping watch over their flocks by night;" and who had only power to be simple witnesses of what they saw and heard, and to praise God for the blessings he had bestowed upon his people. This teaches us, that lowly circumstances do not in the least interfere with the divine communications. It is as easy for God Almighty to hold communication with the humblest as with the most exalted. If lowly circumstances are no hindrance to the divine communications, a lowly temper will favour them. He bids us expect divine communications when in a lowly frame; but to expect that the Lord should pass us by, and refuse those manifestations of his glory, if ever we cherish pride.

The passage also before us, affords us *a certain proof that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Messiah*; that he was the promised Saviour, and that we may look for no other. It was not to one person to whom these communications were made, but to several; and they could not all be mistaken in the things which are here predicted. If *one* might have imagined the vision of angels, it was impossible that *several* should at the same moment imagine it, if it had not really happened. Still less was it probable that they should imagine, not one vision, but two; that they should suppose first one angel to address them, and then that they saw a multitude of the heavenly host, and heard them praising God. Again, it was still less likely that it could have been imagination, that they should have supposed they distinctly heard words, and those not a few but many, and these words exactly according with the birth of that Saviour: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." And still less could it be by imagination, that they learned before-hand that such a child was born in the neighbouring country, and that they should find him in a most improbable place—laid in a manger; and that so minute a circumstance should have occurred to the imagination, as that he should be laid in swaddling clothes in that manger. So that it is impossible to refer this narrative to the imagination of these shepherds to whom the angels revealed this truth. If the narrative be true, then did the shepherds in fact see the angelic herald of this great truth. And as this herald declared, that as this child that was that day born was the

Saviour, Christ the Lord; then, if this narrative be true, Jesus is indeed the Christ whom his people were taught to expect.

Again, the narrative must be true, for we find that *it was received universally by the early Christian fathers*; that a hundred years after the death of St. John, it was acknowledged by Origen; that it was quoted by Hieronimus, the disciple of Polycarp—Polycarp being the friend of St. John: nay more, it is found in the Syriac version, which is ascribed to the second century, or as some think, more probably, even to the first; it is found in one hundred and thirteen catalogues of the sacred Scriptures, independent almost of each other, and formed early in the history of the Christian Church, and in different parts of the world. And how could all this be possible, unless this Book were written by the author to whom it is ascribed, by Luke, the companion of St. Paul? Under these circumstances, could this narrative possibly be a forgery? If so, it must be forged about the close of the first century: and if so, is it conceivable, that those who were the immediate friends of St. Luke, who was the companion of Paul, should have known nothing of the fact? And if they were totally ignorant of it, would the Christian Church have begun to acknowledge it, when it so suddenly appeared that no one knew from whence it came, and that it was utterly unknown to the primitive Christians? So that it is inconceivable that this is a forgery.

On the other hand, there is an internal proof, that has been often adverted to—its undesigned coincidence with the other Gospels; the manifest tokens of honesty, utterly inconsistent with the idea that it was a forgery subsequent to the event. Had it been a forgery, it must have betrayed itself by many inconsistencies, however carefully that forgery might have been composed. But if it indeed be, as it is, correctly ascribed to St. Luke, then must the narrative itself be true: because, if there were no shepherds, who had kept their watch over their flocks by night, the inhabitants of Bethlehem must have been acquainted with that fact; and the enemies of Christianity were numerous and keen enough to have convicted this writer of falsehood. If Joseph and Mary had not come from Nazareth to Bethlehem, their Jewish relations must have known that fact, and would, most unquestionably, have carefully made that known, that these Christians might not palm on the world, that this new sect might not palm on the world, the falsehood of the birth of their alleged Messiah. Again: we read in the seventeenth and eighteenth verses, that those shepherds, when they had seen this vision of angels, “made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.” So that all the inhabitants of Bethlehem, and all round about, who are alleged to have heard these facts, if they never had heard them, would unquestionably have joined the priests, in condemning this early fact, and declared that these things were not so. So that the evidence for this being a narrative written by St. Luke, proves further, that the history which he wrote was itself true, worthy to be received as a narrative of facts, and that this vision was really presented to the shepherds who heard it, and that the message was from God, and that that child, of whom they spoke to the shepherds was indeed the Christ.

Thus our faith rests upon unquestionable testimony; upon facts which we are not allowed, by the historical evidence, for one moment to doubt. And

thus, as one particular text, or one particular book, rests upon a chain of evidence like this, so there are a number of independent chains of evidence of the same kind, all tending to give us the fullest conviction of this truth—that these Scriptures are inspired records, and facts that really happened—and that when we are building our faith on this, we are building it upon a rock.

Again, we are called to notice *the testimony of the angelic messengers to these shepherds*. “The angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” Although they were making known to the shepherds, the birth of one who was apparently nothing but an humble infant, placed in the humblest circumstances, with nothing outward to attract their regard, yet did this angelic messenger declare, in the first place, that he was a *Saviour*; that he was come to deliver his people from their sins; that he was that promised person who was to be born, mighty to save, able to bear the load of the world’s iniquities, and to carry unnumbered souls in perfect purity, to perfect bliss, for ever to share his glory. This lowly child was likewise *Christ*; he was the anointed of God, appointed of God to execute this same work, filled with the Holy Spirit of God to accomplish it; and accepted when his work was done; the Saviour in whom it was the will of the Almighty that all his people should trust. They announced him, besides, as *Christ the Lord*, one who should rise to reign over the universe. He was, as the just reward of his condescension and his sufferings, to have all hearts and all worlds for his own. And yet, glorious as he was, the angel further announced *the lowly circumstances* in which they should find him. “This shall be a sign to you; a proof that our message is from heaven; a proof that you are not deluded; a proof in which your faith might rest assured, because imagination could never direct you to such an expectation as this: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” He should lie in a manger, in the lowliest circumstances; “there being no room for him in the inn.” He shall be wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying there, a little infant in all his helplessness; in his own helplessness, and in the lowly condition of the manger, giving a most remarkable proof of the condescension of the Almighty.

Again, we have in this passage the declaration of *the joyfulness of this message*. When they announced these facts to the shepherds, they announced them under these terms; “I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” Had our Saviour come merely as a man, however perfect and endowed with pre-eminent virtues, to set us an example of holy excellence, these had been no glad tidings to the miserable transgressors who could never imitate that virtue, and if they did, could never remove from themselves the curse of God. Those glad tidings would vanish into empty sound: if the Lord and Saviour is nothing but a man, he is no Saviour to the lost. Nor would these have been glad tidings, if, whatever his work on earth, he had come as a divine person, and merely to leave us to work out our own justification before God. If he had not come to make a perfect atonement for our sins, his coming would not have been glad tidings: the means of our improvement might have involved us in deeper guilt, but the absence of the atonement would have left

us still under the curse. Whatever the merits or the virtues of this divine person, still he would have been unable to save his people from their sins. Nor would it have been glad tidings to us, even if he had wrought out an atonement for our sins, in a measure, and left us to merit our pardon before God, by our improvement, our repentance, and our obedience: because, unable in the least, to work anything acceptable before God, utterly defective in the best of our services, had justification depended in the least on our own merit, we never could have been justified before God. And these glad tidings would have been again extinguished, nor would they have been glad tidings for us, (though justification had been free,) if we had been left to prepare ourselves by our own unassisted efforts for heaven. The blood of Christ should be our title; because our efforts would have left us corrupt; because all the motives with which the Gospel furnishes us, would have been insufficient to enlighten or subdue that great power of corruption with which we have to struggle.

But these were glad tidings of great joy, because *they announced a Saviour who should be all-sufficient*; who should accomplish the work which required two natures—divine and yet human—who should atone for transgression, and make an end of sin, and justify those who believe in him, and sanctify them through faith; making them meet for heaven, and raising them by his merit and power to a place in glory by himself, from whence they should never fall.

This blessing was not to be confined to a few. It was these simple shepherds to whom the first tidings were brought: but the angel said, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to *all* people." And if the words "to all people" referred chiefly to the Jews, yet the very fact that the angel would not confine the message to those few to whom it was delivered, but that it announced at once that all people should share in the joy, leads our thoughts to that which a number of other passages abundantly confirm—that he was not the Saviour of the Jew only, but the Saviour of the Gentile: and in the widest sense of the word, this would be glad tidings of great joy to all nations, for "all nations shall be blessed in him, and all nations should call him blessed."

The last point to which our attention is called in the passage is, *the view which the angels of God are represented as taking of this event*. Not only did one herald angel come to announce the Saviour's birth, but scarcely had he finished his message, but "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God." Numbers stopped to witness that scene at Bethlehem; numbers were delighted in the hearing of men to praise God for his accomplished purposes. Since angels are the messengers of mercy to our world, (and obviously by their ministry here, they seem to take an interest in the great things of redemption,) we may believe, we may hope and rejoice in the imagination, that they conveyed this news to other worlds also; and that as they were the heralds of God's goodness here, they are so throughout the universe; everywhere proclaiming as the result of Christ's work, in this our inferior world, "Glory to God in the highest heavens, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

These angelic beings are elsewhere represented as praising God for his mercy. Not that *they* were redeemed, or directly interested in his work; but as our Lord



afterwards assures the disciples—"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth:" and the birth of Jesus Christ promised, as they well knew, to people heaven with myriads of repentant sinners. They rejoiced with benevolent sympathy, at the unbounded happiness which he was going to communicate to others. Nor less would they rejoice, with liberal pleasure, at this manifestation of God's unbounded goodness, and delight in the manifestation of the divine perfections, unparalleled in the history of heaven; and in which they would see their Maker's glory more plainly, more refulgently, more dazzlingly than in all his other works. No wonder that they were seen by the shepherds, uniting with that herald-angel in singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

My brethren, if our minds are rightly tuned—if by prayer and meditation we are ready to embrace such truths as these—how much there is which may solemnize, and animate, and cheer, and sanctify the heart. Let us now, in dependence on God's blessing, looking for his grace, each one for himself, and all for all, try to enter on these blessings. Let us endeavour to apply them to our own personal convictions, our sanctification, our comfort. Let us remember that the child which was at Bethlehem presented to these shepherds, was indeed, according to the testimony of the angels, the Saviour, the Christ, the Lord. He is a Saviour to us. When we think of that lowly scene, however humble, however simple, let us remember, that He who laid there, in all the helplessness of infancy, was our Saviour—that blessed Being who came to rescue us from the cruel dominion of Satan, from the miserable penalty of sin. He was our Saviour, by unknown sufferings intending to raise us to unknown glory. He was Christ, the anointed of God, in whom you and I are called to exercise unhesitating confidence. He was the Lord; he, by all that condescension which he manifested in coming, is worthy to reign over all our hearts. You and I, my Christian friends, are his property; we are bound to employ our faculties and time to glorify him: his will must be ours, if we are his constant disciples; for this Jesus is Christ the Lord. Nor ever, unless we mean to shape our course by his will, to follow his holy guidance, give ourselves to his service, conform to his image, and live for his glory—never let us call him Lord. Let our lips falter in pronouncing his name, since, while we call him Lord, we do not acknowledge his dominion, we do not yield to his empire. If Christ Jesus sunk so low—so far from losing his dignity by that condescension, it was that which manifested all his glory: and by that are we bound for ever to be his. While we gaze at this manger, let us not interfere with his goodness; but let it not make us forget his majesty.

But again, glorious as he is, and though he is the Saviour, Christ the Lord, the exalted Redeemer, who is the Head over all things to his Church, yet let us combine with that glory his poor condition, that we may feel an abundant assurance, that he accounts nothing beneath him to do for the humblest of his disciples. His manger, these swaddling clothes, ought to be an utter refutation to that suspicion which ever arises in the minds of many of Christ's disciples—that they are beneath his notice. Did he, all-glorious as he was, assume this infirm nature of ours to himself, and endure, in his own personal experience, the infirmities of childhood, as well as manhood? Then who of his disciples here can say, that he is not ready to sympathize with all their feelings, and to

watch over all their interests? In everything that you can ask him to do for you *now*, my Christian friends, there could be no self-denial, there can be no sacrifice: but when he became a child for us, it was a sacrifice unparalleled; it was then that he shewed the depth of his condescension. It were ungrateful to him, instead of being humility in you, if ever you doubt that that exalted Saviour condescends to all your infirmities, and sympathizes in all your feelings.

But again: since our Lord came down to this low condition, and was a child in Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger, let it teach us all to renounce for ever all high and lofty thoughts. If he consented to be thus low for us, it is utterly unbecoming the disciples of Christ knowingly to cherish pride. I might urge upon you to avoid a tyrannical disposition, against which it is said God sets himself; which is found, in fact, to be inconsistent with gratitude, and devotion, and trust, and love. Think of it in this light—that it is utterly inconsistent in those that are the disciples of the Saviour, who was willing to be born in a manger for our sakes. Did he manifest such lowliness of heart in his whole course on earth, and in his choice of the position in which he stood on earth? How, then, can we call ourselves his disciples, if we nourish the contrary disposition? Do I address any of the people of God, who are placed by his providence in low, obscure circumstances? Never for one moment repine at that allotment of your Father in heaven, since you see, that hereby you are conformed to the condition of Christ. Do I address any here who suffer from the pride of their fellow creatures? Let me entreat them never to repel pride with pride—which is our natural temper, which is the disposition we find rising in our souls; but remember how Christ condescended when on earth to meet pride, ever by unconquerable lowliness. Do I address any whom it has pleased God to afflict in various ways? Never let the thought be cherished by you for one moment, that he is dealing with you harder than you deserve. Come to this scene at Bethlehem; gaze, in imagination, on the Saviour, a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger; and then feel, that, whatever God appoints to you in your course to heaven, you may always take gratefully and patiently, because it is his appointment.

And may we all earnestly strive to subdue more and more each lofty thought which rises in our minds. Remember that pride is not an inference of the understanding, leading us to judge ourselves superior to others; or it would be less evil in its influence, and more easily kept in moderation: but pride is an imperious temper—perhaps I should rather call it a passion, of the heart, leading the person before examination, promptly, and in an exaggerated way, to think highly of himself; and because it is deeply rooted in our nature, it requires the greatest and the most continued exertions to remove it, or even to diminish it in the soul. Look then at the example of Jesus Christ; and let each one who is conscious that this evil prevails in his character and in his heart, earnestly set himself to eradicate it before God: let him see the wickedness of it; and let him contemplate the defilement which it causes in his soul: and in the presence of One who was once a child for him, once for him laid in a manger, let him abjure those high thoughts, confess his sinfulness as a sinner, consent to be nothing in the presence of God, and not wish to be thought highly of by his fellow men. I would wish to be understood, not to urge on any one that he scorn the opinions of the best and of the wisest of his fellow-

creatures. This were only a new, and a worse, species of pride. But I would wish that each one would consent that he should be thought to be as weak, as tempted, as sinful, as he knows himself to be ; not taking pleasure in receiving that approbation of men, which his own heart convinces him that, as a guilty sinner before God, he does not deserve.

Thus gazing on the Redeemer's lowliness at Bethlehem, until all high and swelling thoughts of ourselves are gone, may we, as guilty sinners, receiving the salvation of Christ as the effect of redeeming love, delight in glorifying the grace of God, and lose sight of ourselves altogether.

Again we find, that the birth of our Saviour is termed here "*glad tidings of great joy.*" It follows hence, that all who rightly understand the Gospel, must find it a source of great joy to their own hearts. Is it so with you, my Christian friends? Does the news of Christ's birth and ministry on earth, make you this day happy? Do you feel that in this one thought, you have a Saviour, Christ the Lord, you have enough to make you happy? "I bring you," said the angel, "good tidings of great joy ;" and those good tidings were, "Unto you is born a Saviour." My brethren, born for *us* ; he is *our* Saviour, if we are his disciples. Do we feel it to be good tidings of great joy? If not, it is plain, either that we are not the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, or else that we have lost that realizing view of the glory of his person, and the nature of his work, and so are in a state of mind in which it is utterly unbecoming his disciples to continue. He is born as a Saviour to us ; and if our faith is in lively exercise, this must make us happy. He is our Saviour, and he has, therefore, borne away the load of our sins. He is our Saviour, who shelters us from the wrath of God ; and we shall have a place in the heavens when we are made lowly enough to dwell there. He is our Saviour from sin, whenever we look to him to shelter us against its power. He is our Saviour, who has all power in his hands to guard us from every ill. He is our Saviour, and unchangeably the same : he will never leave us, nor forsake us. He is our Saviour, accepted of God : angels, thrones, and powers being placed beneath his feet ; and he is controlling all events for our good. He is our Saviour, and the guilt under which we lay is removed ; and the sins which we have to struggle with, shall be subdued also. If he is our Saviour, no promise of God to his people can fail to us ; no good thing will the Lord withhold from us, while we are found walking in his way. He is our Saviour, and we should rejoice in all he has been, all he is, and all he will ever be to us, in all his glorious promises revealed in us by his present power and love. He is our Saviour, and the Saviour of those that are his. Parents, you should rejoice, in thinking of him as the Saviour of your children ; and the husband should think of him as the Saviour of his wife ; and the friend should regard him as the Saviour of his friend. When you think of those that are dear to you, to pass so soon from this present state of being to another, O, accompany that thought with the remembrance, that there is One mightier than you, ready to welcome them there, and shall gather you, and those that are belonging to you, into glory with him, to be for ever happy : for this is an announcement of good tidings of great joy, not to one or to two, but to all people.

We may permit our thoughts to rest upon this blessed truth ; this gracious Saviour is diffusing his blessings far and wide. When you think of the joy

that is poured into your own hearts, and anticipate the future with so much gratitude and peace, then extend your view to those whom you love best here, thanking that good and glorious Deliverer, who has snatched them from the gulf on the brink of which you were placed. Nor let this be the extent of your thoughts : remember he is prepared thus to bless the world. And when you think how happy your home has been made, and how happy the heart of your child and your friend, by the love of Christ, then say in your own mind, it is thus that he will bless the world ; and unnumbered sinners, now lying in darkness and the shadow of death, shall, one day or other, acknowledge Christ the Lord, and in that acknowledgment find everlasting bliss.

Then, lastly, does this message set before us, as an example, *the alacrity with which the blessed spirits of heaven conveyed this news to fallen man*. My brethren, they had no such cause to praise God for redeeming love as we have, and their alacrity should not outdo ours in making the Saviour known. If Christ makes you happy this day, you feel happy, not because you are wealthy—not because you are strong—not because your time is busily and well occupied in employments you delight in—not because your friends are many, and you meet them in circumstances of comfort—but because you have a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. Remember this, too, is the highest and most enduring happiness of any sinner : and whilst so blessed of God, let it be your prayer, and let it be your effort, to communicate that happiness, so far as in you lies ; to be God's instruments in diffusing these great blessings throughout the world. And this day, while rejoicing in the love of a found Saviour, entreat a gracious God that he may be found in the whole family of man. Let us never think coldly of the extension of that great cause, which angels came down from heaven to earth thus gladly to make known to sinners.

Above all, this day, give your minds, my Christian friends, to rejoicing meditation on the person and on the work of Christ ; and let not our happiness at this season of the year, be derived merely from seeing around us happy faces, or from counting up the blessings of God's providence, or taking, for one moment, a pleasing respite from the busy cares of life ; nor in any of that kind of enjoyment in which the world finds delight, in unseemly revelry and merriment. Let our happiness be this—that we have a Saviour—and let that thought at once sanctify and endear all the gifts of Providence, and all the employments of time ; and send us forth to the world again to serve him with more zeal, fidelity, and peace, than we have hitherto done.



## THE HIDDEN THINGS OF GOD.

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“Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.”—ISAIAH, xlv. 15

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THE inspired writers, as you all know, dwell, frequently and earnestly, on the inaccessible splendour that surrounds the Creator. “Clouds and darkness are round about him.” “Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out.” “He maketh darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.” It is in language such as this that the Bible speaks of the Infinite and Eternal Jehovah; and whensoever prophets and apostles desire to give us the sublimest view of our God, they proceed, not to diffuse description, but draw at once an awful veil between us and his majesty; and whenever, in olden time, it pleased God to give tokens of his visible presence, he came not down with the gorgeous retinue of celestial pomp, but with the deep solemnity of mystic clouds he bowed the hearts of his chosen people. It was a cloud which conducted the wanderings of the Israelites; it was a cloud which filled the tabernacle of the Lord. The symbols of God’s greatness wear the robe of concealment; and he demands homage, not so much by what he has revealed, as by what the revelation pronounces obscure.

And it is to be observed that all this proceeds, not from unwillingness to disclose his greatness, but rather from the fact that, since this greatness is divine, it could not be endured by human vision. It was the inevitable consequence of his being God, that by shadowy tokens only he discovers himself to man. To this he himself refers when, discoursing with Moses as his own friend. Moses had besought the Lord that he would show him his glory: but God said, “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live:” and although he made “all his goodness” to pass before him, as being that which the creatures of earth might behold, and yet breathe—when the august train of his glory swept by, he hid his servant in the cleft of the rock, lest he should be withered to nothing by the unearthly blaze.

And if we pass to our own days, it will be remarked, that we think much, and speak much, of the mysteries which indubitably exist in the nature of God, and in his operations, whether of providence or of grace. But after all, it may be that we scarcely regard those mysteries in their most important point of view. We rather consider them as secrets which overpass our ingenuity, than as things which yield a harvest of honour to the Creator, and advantage to ourselves. There is a likelihood of our not regarding these mysteries as necessary portions

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of the dealing between finite beings and the Infinite, and as forced into God's dispensation by his unmeasured superiority over the work of his own hand. Nay, we are well aware, that many go even so far as to renounce and decry Revelation altogether, just because it contains truths too big for human comprehension; forgetting or overlooking that, since it probably belongs to the very nature of God that he should "hide himself," their ground for rejection is virtually a ground of belief and of acceptance.

Now, our text seems to breathe the language of admiration and praise. It confesses God mysterious; but, at the same time, its tone is that of grateful acknowledgement. And we think it a profitable subject of discourse opened by the passage, when you consider it as a burst of thanksgiving on the part of the prophet. We wish to examine into the fact that the God of Israel is a God that doth hide himself, with reference alike to its truth and its consequences: in other words, we desire to prove to you how true it is that God hideth himself, and yet that this concealment should move us to admiration, and thanksgiving, and awe. There are properly before us, then, two topics of discourse on which we design to address you: the first, that of God's hiding himself with regard to his own nature and properties; the second, that of hiding himself with regard to his dealings with his creatures; showing under both, that it should be in the tone of triumph and of praise that we should exclaim, "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."

Now, in good truth, we know nothing of God in himself; we know him only in his attributes, and his attributes only as written in his Word, and shown in his works. We conceive of goodness, and power, and wisdom, and purity, and justice: we suppose these qualities all infinite, and bound up and concentrated, in one sublime and incommunicable essence: but since from this our conceptions can never rise, we feel that the Deity is near us at every instant—that, He is around us—that in Him we live, and move, and have our being; and yet, at the same time, we know, that the distant borders of the universe are full of His presence; that there moves not a being on the very outskirts of creation, who is not drawing animation from His fulness: and thus God remains ever the greatest mystery to man. And when we afterwards launch out into the unfathomable deep of his perfections, or travel across the unlimited spreadings of his life-time, or walk the circle of his dwelling-place, we feel ourselves presently overborne by the stupendousness of the enterprize, and forced to confess that, whatever the powers of other orders of intelligences, the highest energies of our own quail before the immensity and magnificence of Jehovah.

Now, there is nothing that should surprise us in this, if we would but observe how little way our reason can make when labouring amongst things with which we are every day conversant: but we should be prepared to expect, that it would be altogether incompetent to the unravelling the Incomprehensible. It will also be evident that we are a mystery to ourselves; that every object around us baffles our penetration; that there is not an insect, and not a leaf, and not an atom, which does not master us as we attempt to apprehend its nature and its growth. We must admit there is a presumption which upbraids language in expecting to ascertain what God is, and how God subsists. If then, making trial of our powers on the commonest objects by which we are surrounded, we feel ourselves defeated in our philosophy by the worm or the water-drop; can

it be rational, when we turn ourselves to the study of God, to expect to find the Almighty a being which we may thoroughly comprehend? It is enough that we observe the most gifted of our fellows applying themselves assiduously to the commonest facts, the most familiar occurrences; and yet able to do nothing more than trace such a connexion between cause and effect, we ought to be convinced that we possess not the capacity which can allow us to embrace the wonders of Deity: so that not only the stars as they march in their brightness, and the winds as they sweep in their rushings, and the waters as they flow in their tides; but every sand-grain, and every bubble, and every beat of the pulse, and every blade of grass, and every floating insect—all join in preparing us for the fact, that the God of Israel must be a God that hideth himself.

We go on, however, to observe, that even where God makes announcements of his nature, they are such as quite to baffle our reason. We turn, for example, to the doctrine of the Trinity: we are not, perhaps, competent to judge whether the union of three persons in one essence could have been intelligible to man; it may be we have not the faculties by which so wonderful a fact can in any case be grappled with. We say that, whatever the amount of vouchsafed information, we must still have continued unacquainted with the mode how three can be one: but, at all events, it is certain that God has concealed this mode from us: he hideth himself even when he revealeth himself. And what we would ever maintain in respect of all this concealment of Deity is, that it should summon forth our thankfulness. What food would there be to human pride if even reason availed to the finding out of God! It seems clear that, so long, at least, as he is trammelled by a corrupt nature, man would soon cease to feel his own utter insignificance, if the Almighty brought himself down to the level of his understanding. We all know that even now reason is prone enough to think lightly of God, though compelled by such a doctrine as that of the Trinity to confess ourselves unable to cope with his nature. And if her search were successful, if her power were commensurate with her daring, in all likelihood she would scorn Him whose dwelling lay not beyond the reach of her soaring, and the sovereignty which she esteemed herself able thoroughly to investigate. There would have been a fairness in the objection, that a revelation which brought down the Infinite to the level of the finite must contain false representations, and deserve, therefore, to be placed under the outlawry of the world. We should have reason sitting in assize on revelation. and when man found there were given no account of God but what was, in every respect, easy and intelligible, why, it would scarcely be questioned that reason would give down as her verdict, and justice applaud loudly the decision, that the alleged communication from heaven wanted the signs and the essentials of so illustrious an origin. And thus, if there were no hiding of himself on the part of Deity, we must confess that the lawlessness of our race would have vastly outstripped its present dimensions; that pride, pampered by the discovery that God was comprehensible, would have dictated the opinion that there were no risk in despising his authority; or that infidelity, obtaining from revelation itself a plausible excuse for its rejection, would have taken out the point from all the threatenings of Christianity. And if such would have been the consequences had there been no hiding of Deity, should it not be with a burst of thankfulness that we exclaim, "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour?"

We next observe, that so soon as God has been addressed as a God that hideth himself, he is addressed as "the Saviour." And we are free to own, in respect to the scheme of our salvation, that, while everything is disclosed that has reference to ourselves, there is much hidden that has reference to God. It may be doubted whether redemption through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, is made sufficiently matter of simple faith, and simple faith only. Men are fond of striving to develope the secret reasons, as well as the obvious results, of the stupendous plan; and thus transgress the just bounds of inquiry. We are bound to rejoice in the countless benefits of the oblation of the Son of God, and to study diligently its pressing warnings against sin; while there must always be an awful and overwhelming mystery, quite unapproachable by man, in the fact that, for the sake of an apostate race, the Son of God died upon the cross. And besides this general mysteriousness, there is a great deal hidden in respect of the atonement. We can form no adequate notion of the incarnation; how the Godhead tabernacled in flesh; how Divinity and humanity could coalesce to make a Mediator; how there could be a bearing of sin, and yet freedom from sinfulness—the impossibility of being overcome by temptation, and yet such a capacity of being tempted as should secure sympathy to ourselves. On all these points, the more we search the more we shall be persuaded, that it lies out of the power of human reason—at least, with the present amount of revelation—to scan the wonders of the person, and to unravel the intricacies of the work of the Redeemer.

"Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself," is what we are forced to exclaim, even when contemplating God as "the God of Israel, the Saviour." But then, in what tone should we make the exclamation? We can assert of that which is thus hidden, that it is alike for God's glory and our benefit that it is hidden. The points to which we have referred are not points which it concerns man accurately to understand, though it is at their own peril not to believe: and there is nothing by which God is so much honoured, and the soul so much advantaged, as by our taking him at his word. Faith—which is nothing else than the triumph of spirit over flesh—pours the largest contributions into the treasure house of Deity, and is also our best discipline as probationers for eternity. And if there were no difficulties in redemption, nothing to contend against, nothing to struggle with—if, in short, God had not hidden himself, there would have been none of that glory which now redounds to him from the revealed dispensation that we walk by faith, not by sight; none of that moral advantage which flows to ourselves from the being required to lean constantly on an invisible staff, and to tread the waters as though walking on a pavement of brass.

Besides the fact that the mysteries of redemption exercise faith, and therefore demand thankfulness, we observe generally, in reference to the Bible, as before in reference to the Divine nature, that it is the sublimity which produces the obscurity. We could not rise up from the perusal of Scripture without a deep conviction that it is the Word of the living God, had we found no occasion on which reason was compelled to humble herself before the simple fact, that faith has been the only act which came within the range of our moral achievement. And whilst, therefore, we see going forward on all sides the accumulation of the evidences of Christianity, and history and science are bringing their stores, and emptying them at the feet of religion, and the very wrath of the adversar



(being but the accomplishment of prophecy) is proving that we follow no cunningly-devised fable; it appears clear that nothing was so to be expected as that God should hide himself while he is revealing himself as the Saviour; and we take it as the last link in the chain of the lengthened demonstration, that, whatever there is in the Bible which is disclosed, there is much kept back which, added to the other reasons of concealment, witnesses to the inspiration of the Scriptures: and should it not be as a chorus to the song of noble thanksgiving, that we use the words, "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour?"

But again: if God, when discovering himself as the Saviour, hid much in regard to the mysteries of redemption, there has been, also, hidden much in regard to its individual application. How secretly the Holy Spirit enters into the heart of man! How completely has God hidden, except as displayed in its effects, the intense and energetic operations of this Divine Person! Who shall bring to light the secret springs of a soul's conversion? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Who can define how the uncreated gales of the Spirit, sweep over the dull caverns of the human heart; how they breathe in them the melodies of glad tidings; and awaken strains of glory, and honour, and praise unto Him who is invisible? But though the agency be hidden, such strains are awakened; ay, and we are bound to say that the very concealment heightens the ascription of praise. The man feels in himself a new creation; and perceiving that Satan's kingdom has been overthrown by a stone, like that in prophecy, cut out of the mountain without hands, he dares not look at second causes: it were impious to speak of it as human; the secrecy stamps the divinity. He recognizes Deity in the Saviour, just because the Saviour hides himself; and so, throwing himself down at once before the footstool of the Eternal, he pours forth the exulting and grateful confession, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour!"

Now, it seems unnecessary that, after thus considering what God hath hidden with respect to himself in the works of grace, we should dwell at any length on what he hath similarly hidden in the works of nature. We have already observed that every thing within, above, and around us, is matter of inscrutable mystery. We stand in the midst of a mighty temple, the whole visible frame of nature rising around us, like the walls of a gorgeous sanctuary: and we gaze on the beautiful arch of heaven, on the sun walking in brightness, on the moon, and the stars, and the dark cloud of the thunder: but what know we of this magnificent array? What account can man give of the hidden springs of such vast machinery? Who will tell us what is that light which makes all things visible? Who will explain that secret wondrous energy which retains, century after century, so many worlds, each in its separate orbit? Whose penetration is not utterly baffled by the growth of a blade of grass—by the falling of a stone—by the floating of a feather? When asked, we state reasons, and assign causes; but this is only shifting off the difficulty. It were easy to talk of the gravity of matter, and the laws of nature: philosophy is at fault: the learned man knows little more than the savage, of the amazing processes which go on daily in the laboratory of nature, while he may be sitting on the lofty pinnacle of science, a child shall propose questions which shall perplex and confound

him, and bring him down from his vaunted eminence, and force him to the humiliating confession, that what can be discovered by man bears no proportion to what is hidden by God. And if so little way can be made in the mastery of the world without, what wisdom have we in respect of the world that is within? Is not man at all times veiled and hidden from himself? The operation of mind on matter—where is the plumb-line to fathom this abyss? The faculty of embodying thought in speech—what a marvel! The dwelling of the immortal principle within the fleshly tenement—the soarings and wanderings of the spirit—the undefined connexion between the final departure of the soul, and the destruction of vitality; these and a thousand others, lie hidden beyond the reach of the most curious anatomy, and we may venture to say, that man must die ere he can hope to discover how he lived. There is nothing teaches us our own ignorance so much as knowledge when pushed to its utmost limits. In enlarging the sphere of light, you equally enlarge the surrounding sphere of darkness. But in what language, in what tone, shall we speak of the Creator thus hiding himself, since each fresh discovery in science still seems only to amplify the field still beyond? Is it not true, that, the more man searches, the more cause is found why God should be magnified? The wonders of nature, which, had they been completely unveiled, would soon have ceased to interest, or become the subject of admiration or praise, are, by being partially hidden, made to contribute to the glory of their Creator. If God had bared the secrets of creation, so that we could exhaust the store-house whose very threshold we are now scarce able to pass, is it not evident that the familiarity would have generated indifference to the skill of the mighty Architect; and that the mere fact that there was nothing to find out, would have made us unobservant of the broad impress of Divinity? Under the existing arrangement, as we may term it, of God's hiding himself, creation ministers perpetually to our awe and admiration of the Creator; every new leaf, as it is turned over by the intelligence of industry, and the guidance of inquiry, presenting a new witness to the wisdom and power of Deity, whilst, at the same time, it tells out the inexhaustibleness of the volume; so that continually learning, and yet continually finding there is more to learn, we pass on from stage to stage, climbing (so to speak) the magnificence of God, only to know that what appeared the summit is but the basis of a loftier mountain; and thus compelled, as marvel on marvel crowds the vision, to exclaim—O not with the tongue of regret and murmuring, but with the tongue of worship and rapture—"Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour!"

But we shall not enlarge upon this; your own thoughts will suggest many similar reflections. We rather proceed to the second division of our subject, to explain how God hides himself in regard to his dealings with his creatures.

Now, first of all, God conceals much in the dispensations of his providence. He does not lay open the reasons of his appointments; he does not explain why prosperity should be allotted to one man, and adversity to another. In affliction, for example, our cry is most commonly that of Job, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." The wicked, moreover, often flourish like a green bay tree, while the righteous are cast down, or given over to the extremes of misery and destitution. Evil, too, is permitted to walk unblushingly abroad, while wisdom crieth in vain in our streets. It is beyond question that there is much

that is hidden in all this, which we may feel to overpass our philosophy: but we contend that what is thus hidden furnishes matter of thankfulness; for man is hereby thrown upon his faith; and faith, as we have already said, gives most honour to God, and is the best discipline for ourselves. And although such reasoning includes but a small portion of mankind, namely, those who in heart and soul are dedicated to God, yet be it remembered, there is approaching a day of solemn retribution, a day when every human action shall have its recompense, and every divine proceeding its vindication. When the Almighty Judge shall reduce to order every discordant element—when all secret things shall be brought to light, and the discrepancies of ages reconciled in a moment—when the reason of each permission, the design of each allotment, the intent of every dealing, shall flash forth from the open book of providence, so that the gathered universe shall read the combined mercy and wisdom; will there not, think you, come forth from unnumbered multitudes such an ascription of glory at all that was thus hidden—an ascription from the mouths of the lost, as well as the redeemed—that there shall seem no comparison between the honour that would be given to God were he pleased to make such dealings plain, and that which is wrung from countless generations, when the mysteries of ages, and the centuries of time shall all end, ere time itself shall be buried in eternity? O, the voices of teeming myriads, from Adam down to his last descendant, as the disordered chaos, as it seems to us, resolves itself into beauty and symmetry—these voices shall be gathered into one peal of confession, “Thou hast magnified thyself, O God, through being a God that hidest thyself!”

But further: God hides from his creatures the day of their death. “One dieth,” saith Job, “in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.” Nature has been ransacked for imagery: the shortness of our days is on every man’s tongue; and every thing that is fleeting, and everything that is fragile, and every thing that is uncertain, has been laid under contribution to furnish similitudes for human life-time. It is a most trite, though a melancholy saying, that no man is able to reckon on the morrow. But the question recurs, Is it not a cause for thanksgiving that he is not able? We think that, such is the constitution of our nature, that, if a fixed period were allotted to our days, the thought even of the distant hour would, in most cases, prove an insupportable burden: for, strange as it may seem, the certainty that the evil day would arrive after a given number of suns had risen and set, would be far more irksome and grievous than the present uncertainty whether it may not come to-morrow. Men, who can be cheerful and active under the consciousness that they *may* die the next moment, would be oppressed and overborne by the positive *assurance* that they shall live ten years more, but not a moment beyond that. Under such circumstances, the business of the world would be almost at a stand: men’s morose and gloomy meditations would be telling over the sum of their remaining weeks: one would think it useless to plan what he should not live to execute; and another to sow what he should not live to reap: and thus the whole fabric of human society would crumble away and fall, just because its several members knew the period of their respective dissolutions. A community, every member of which could define, with terrible precision, the day of his death, must be a community void of

that incessant and pains-taking activity, through which alone well-being can be procured or maintained.

Neither is it only the destruction of the interests of society, that an acquaintance with the day of death would produce: there would result none but an injurious effect to the interests of piety. We hold that such must be the case, even with the interests of the righteous. There would require little or nothing of that watchfulness which they must now give to the keeping of their lamps trimmed, and their lights burning. There would be no demand for that godly anxiety to be found on their guard, which now forbids their being remiss in the service of their Master. And when the time of departure drew nigh, even if the mind were not overwhelmed by the contemplation, there would be no room for patience, none for resignation; and the precise knowledge of all that was hid, would pass like a blight over those softer graces of piety, whose very existence pre-supposes that every thing must be left to the unknown will of our Father. And there would be nothing of that hoping and quietly waiting for the salvation of God, which, pronounced good by the prophet, has been proved in the experience of the Church the best discipline for immortality. And as for the sinner who has the hardihood to delay repentance, though, for any thing he can tell, he may die in an hour, would he not give an unbridled rein to his every lust, if assured to exist for ten, or twenty, or thirty years? And when the sand was almost run out, would not the consciousness that so little time was left, and that so much had been squandered, tend to produce despair rather than penitence, and to bind him to the persuasion that it was now too late, rather than urge him to endeavours to lay hold of the only redemption? He would put off the matter of salvation to the last year—there would be time enough then; afterwards to the last month, and then to the last week, and then to the last day; persuading himself that even one hour would suffice; the certainty that he could not be taken by surprise, rendering him inaccessible to the most powerful motives by which we now ply those who cannot reckon on a second. And when after this long course of disobedience and procrastination, he knew that his grave was actually digging, and that, after fifty or a hundred more beats of the pendulum, he should be stretched out a corpse; we think the probability would be, that the certainty which had heretofore made him insolent in his sins, would now cause him to be seized on by all the agonies of an uncontrollable dread. Sickness could never alarm, the death of numbers could never admonish, the voice of Providence could never arouse: for, under that dispensation which we suppose, each man would be girt around by his own selfishness, having nothing to fear for himself from what he beholds overtaking his fellows. And if all these results would follow from acquaintance with the time of our dissolution, you are ready to admit, that God's hiding that time should call forth our praise; and gather in fresh corroboration of the truth—and the exclamation should be an exclamation of thankfulness—"Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour!"

Once more. God has hidden much from us respecting the nature of a future state. With the strong imagery of high-wrought diction, and the bold figures of lofty parable, the joys of the righteous and the woes of the wicked are briefly, yet eloquently, portrayed. There is enough disclosed to stimulate zeal, and enough threatened to scare from transgression: but, still, while the heirs of immortality are clothed with corruption, they see only through a glass darkly



and neither the harpings of glorified spirits, nor the wailings of ruined, convey more than a feeble metaphor of the future. There is still much to exercise faith, still much to occupy hope. We may not doubt that our most vivid imaginings make no approach towards the blessedness and majesty of heaven, whilst the awfulness and the wretchedness of hell, outdo immeasurably the worst picturings of the excited apprehension. But if the veil had been more drawn back—if the heavens had been always open to our gaze, and if these eyes of flesh could look above and behold the eternal mansions and the starry crowns—or if the earth were to give up her cold tenantry, and messengers were to come from the prison-house of wretchedness, and, gliding through the ranks of the living, preach to them the secrets of the fire and the rack, and whisper to them horrors at which the knees should knock together, and the blood curdle at the heart—what then, we ask, would become of a state of probation? Where would be the province of faith when every thing was the object of sense? Where would be the trial of hope when every joy was already told? Where the exercise of self-denial when the better portion forced itself on the notice of the most unobservant, compelling, by its burning grandeur, the universal recognition of superiority. Where the justice of that economy, under which a race of sinful beings could have had no place for faith, no sphere for hope, no occasion for self-denial? These, under the present dispensation, are the very stamina of the Christian life, since, had there been no hiding of the future, there could have been comparatively no room for graces which are the elements of godliness; for faith, and hope, and self-denial must have been almost, if not entirely, unknown things, had the firmament rung with the hallelujahs of the ransomed, and been crowded with the tribes of the everlasting city; whilst ever and anon, the cry of lost spirits had come up from the depths, and broken in upon merchants in their counting-houses, and statesmen in their closets, and revellers at their banquet; who will deny that God should be praised for his hiding? And, therefore, it is with the tongue of admiring gratitude we should exclaim, “Thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.”

But lastly, we just remark, in connexion with this illustration, how peculiarly the hiding of the Deity has, by means of prophecy, been made to minister to our advantage. Prophecy is the standing miracle of centuries; a miracle so wonderfully constructed that time, which might be thought to weaken every other, adds only fresh strength to this. The far-off day of its delivery is as surprising as the fact of its fulfilment; but it is clear that the wonder of prophecy is dependent on the combination of our ignorance and of God’s knowledge of the future. It is by his displaying his own acquaintance with that which he has hidden from his creatures, that God makes the hiding to put forth the greatest strength against infidelity; indicating from the very beginning the knowledge of all things, proves his own omniscience and his sovereignty. So that if the future were open to man’s expatiation, there would remain no place for prophecy as the distinct prerogative of Deity; and it would remove altogether that attestation to the truth of Christianity, which, growing and strengthening as time rolls on, resists, like a rock, the advance of scepticism. And if it may be ascertained that concealment, more than anything else, has made Christianity unpregnable, then the proof seems complete, that we give thanks for what is hidden; in other words, that it is in a tone of exultation and praise that we exclaim, “Thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.”

Now it were easy to extend almost indefinitely our illustrations, and to present the same truths under a far greater variety of forms. We have only space, however, to remark in conclusion, that there can be no finer moral discipline for man than results from that delay which must take place before any of his purposes can be consummated. He knows not the end from the beginning; and therefore, when he enters on a plan, even the most matured and best arranged, he is altogether uncertain of the issue: he must work on in total ignorance whether the plan shall succeed or be frustrated. But we hold this arrangement to be palpably for his advantage; he is hereby instructed, that in all his ways he should acknowledge God; and the simple fact that he must labour on as wholly in the dark, the result being hidden up to the moment of the occurrence, dictates such dependence upon God, as could scarcely have been inculcated under the opposite system.

It is thus with all the workings of benevolence. We cannot determine beforehand the measure of success which shall attend our exertions; God effectually hides it. But this very circumstance is calculated (and therefore we should be thankful for the hiding) to make us carry on our undertakings in the best possible spirit, in the consciousness that we are but instruments in the hand of God. It is our part to apply the means, and to leave humbly to the Almighty to produce the result. In educating, for example, the children of the poor, it is but too probable that many of the objects of our solicitude will grow up to a manhood of unrighteousness, and that only a few will so profit by the teaching as to become wise for eternity. It may be, on the other hand, that a large proportion will be essentially advantaged, and that our school-houses shall prove literally the training-houses for heaven. And we must enter on the business of education, and go forward with all its laboriousness, quite uninformed as to what shall be the results: the duty of communicating instruction being clear and imperative; but the consequence of the endeavour being hidden by God. Thus it is the very hiding which causes that God is honoured by our performance of duty. It were comparatively nothing to labour with the certainty of success; the trial of obedience lies in the being summoned to labour when we cannot be assured of success: and if we prosecute the enterprise, in spite of all that is disheartening which may be put forth by the hiding of results, we glorify God by that best of all offerings—a simple and unquestioning conformity to his will: our own obedience being of a far higher cast than if we were stimulated by the known amount of success, is nothing less than a fresh proof, that we should praise God under his character of “the God that hideth himself.”

We shall say but little with regard to the schools of this Ward, which we desire to commend to your liberal support. It clothes and educates fifty children, and labours at present under great depression of funds. Amongst all the schools for which I am called to plead, a City school is always to me an object of peculiar interest. For the most part, our merchants and our traders reside in the suburbs of our great metropolis, whilst the courts and alleys still swarm with the poor: thus there is vast risk that the poor be neglected, and that schools, and other charitable institutions, deprived of their natural guardians, may be thrown on the precarious bounty of strangers. In the present instance, besides the deficiency produced by the death and removal of subscribers, much injury has been done to the school by the extensive alterations still in progress

in the neighbourhood. If you admire the improvements, which add so much to the beauty of our city, remember how many inhabitants they have forced to change residence, and determine that the splendour of architecture shall not be purchased by the abandonment of the children of the poor.

We cannot, then, think that you will be otherwise than liberal in aiding the institution for which we plead. We therefore recur for a moment to the great subject of discourse, and bid you extract comfort from the truth, that our God is a God that hideth himself. In trial, in distress, in affliction, if we see not the clear shining of our Father's face, shall we therefore sit down covered with confusion, and pronounce ourselves forgotten of God? Rather let us think he is but exhibiting that providence which should call forth our admiration and praise, that the God that is the Saviour is a God that doth hide himself: and whatever be the mystery which hangs around the ways and works, the dealings and the purposes of the Almighty—however much he may have hidden, think, I beseech you, how much he has revealed. There is not one thing happeneth but it is essential for our entering into the promised rest. As though it were paved with sun-beams, the narrow path of eternal life runs in unbroken clearness through the deepest cloud of mystery; and when we reach its extremity, when our foot treads its last step on earth, and we just touch the firmament, shall there be, think you, any hiding? Indeed, brethren, we dare not say there will not be any; yet we shall see God as he is; we shall behold him face to face; we shall know, even as also we are known. And if there be any thing yet hidden, we believe it will be the untold stores of our Father's glory, into which it will be our rapturous delight for ever and for ever to search. Yea, we know not whether in this sense the words of our text may not be as a chorus of praise on the lips of those who have entered into the joy of their Lord.

St. Paul, speaking of the love of Christ, speaks of it as "passing knowledge." He says, not the knowledge of man, the knowledge of angels, the knowledge of created or uncreated agencies; but knowledge in itself—knowledge in all its glory, knowledge in all its sublime and infinite extent. And when day by day—(alas, the terms of time are weak—we speak of eternity, and yet measure by the sun—what are days where night cannot enter?)—but when day by day there shall burst upon us fresh and beautiful discoveries of the preciousness of Christ; when the eye shall stand on the height, and trace another line of the depth, and take in another sweep of the breadth and the length of that love which overpasseth knowledge, shall not the crowds of admiring spirits draw you with fresh ardour to your Father's throne; and knowing that there yet remains untravelled districts, cast their crowns at his feet, and exclaim with rapture and admiration, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour?"

Would to God you might all burn with the desire to join the splendid assembly. You will not be content to go alone; you will long to carry multitudes with you; yea, the poor children for whom we now seek your bounty. You will feel an earnest wish that they may be with you in the city which hath foundations: and, O, where that wish is beating in the heart, it cannot be with a niggard hand that you will contribute to the wants of those by whom you are surrounded.

## THE CHRISTIAN A BLESSING.

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REV. H. S. PLUMPTRE, A.M.

ST. MARY'S PAROCHIAL CHAPEL, LAMBETH, AUGUST 17, 1834.

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"Thou shalt be a blessing."—GENESIS, xii. 2.

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Do thou, O God, attach this promise to each of thy servants here assembled. We can desire nothing more at thy hands ; it includes all thy providential and redeeming mercies ; for " I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed."

The individual more immediately interested in this declaration, was one whose name stands conspicuous in Scripture history, as affording a remarkable instance of a vigorous and lively faith ; so that with the character of Abraham will ever be associated the appellation of "the father of the faithful." At the comma d of God he proceeded to sacrifice his son, and leave his country ; he placed himself entirely at the disposal of his Omnipotent Guide ; even against hope, he believed in hope. As he, therefore, signally honoured God by his implicit obedience to his mandate, God was pleased to single him out as the special object of his benediction, making him the appointed chaunnel of communication through which the waters of salvation were to flow to a perishing world : " In thee," said he, " shall all the families of the earth be blessed, and thou shalt be a blessing."

Were the words of my text applicable only to the patriarch, we should read them simply as a matter of ancient history ; but they are applicable equally to a'l who by faith are the descendants of Abraham ; for " this blessedness cometh not upon the circumcision only, but upon the uncircumcision also ;" for blessed is every one, of every description, that feareth the Lord. We propose, then, to consider how much is involved in the declaration of the text.

First of all, it implies that *the subject of God's approval will be a blessing to himself*. In consequence of having been renewed in the Spirit, and made the subject of a new creation in Christ Jesus, he has the peace of God shed abroad in his heart, which diffuses a heavenly serenity over the whole of his life. He breathes a holy atmosphere, which counteracts the moral corruption by which he is surrounded ; preserving him, at least for the most part, uncontaminated by the evil influence of the ungodly world in which he is constrained to dwell. When he goes out, or comes in, a secret stability is imparted to his footsteps, because he walks in the consciousness of an earnest desire to please God, though at the same time under the deep conviction of his own sinfulness, that he falls very far short of that divine perfection at which he would arrive ; still, however, he is able to commit the keeping of his soul and body to Him as unto a



faithful Creator. Yea, though called upon to encounter perils and difficulties, to steer his course amidst dangers great in number and vast in magnitude, even through the dark valley of the shadow of death, he fears no evil, because he has the inward testimony that his God is with him, that His "rod and staff they comfort him;" he realizes to his internal satisfaction the gracious assurance, that "the Lord orders a good man's going, and makes his way acceptable unto himself." Whatever be his station in life, he knows that he is not too insignificant to be overlooked by the eye of Omniscience; that although despised of men, the Lord has given his angels charge over him, not only to preserve him from falling, but to exercise their invisible guardianship, both by day and night, in administering to his wants. Thus delighting himself in the law of the Lord, whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper; or should it not prosper to the extent or in the manner he had anticipated, still he is willing to have his expectation thwarted; knowing that, if it be the will of God, there will be more advantage in the failure of his purpose than in its accomplishment. He is anxious, in all respects, to commit himself and his affairs to be regulated by infinite wisdom; he knows enough of the treachery of his own heart, and the impotency of his own strength, to trust himself; in "every thing, therefore, by prayer and supplication, he makes his requests known unto God," and implores His gracious protection. He desires as far as possible, without any compromise of principle, "to give no offence in any thing," to "live peaceably with all men." Should he, however, unintentionally provoke the enmity of any by whom he may be surrounded, he is the first to seek reconciliation, but the last to feel resentment. He does "not render evil for evil, but contrariwise, blessing." Still, however, he is not alarmed at the menaces of his foe; he knows who can render them powerless, or else convert enmity into friendship; for "when a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." In short, without entering into any further delineation of his character, "a good man," as Solomon observes, "is satisfied from himself:" not with that self-complacency which is the offspring of pride, totally repugnant to Gospel principles; he is, on the contrary, dissatisfied with himself in this respect; he sees nothing in himself but what is calculated to promote self-abasement; nevertheless, he is satisfied *from* himself, because he has the internal conviction, and evidences it by external demonstration, that he is "justified by faith," therefore he has "peace with God," and peace with himself. He rejoices in this, the testimony of his conscience, that in "simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, he has his conversation in the world:" "the Spirit itself bears witness with his spirit that he is a child of God." On this account, therefore, he is satisfied from himself not naturally but spiritually. Thus shall "the man be blessed that feareth the Lord."

But in the second place, he is not only blessed in himself, but *in his family and household*. "God blesseth the habitation of the just; he is in the generation of the righteous." He himself bears testimony to Abraham's fidelity, when he saith, "I know him that he will command his children and household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." Although it is impossible for any parent or master of a family so to control every member of his domestic establishment, as to make them really religious, or even morally good; still he will use every means for the suppression of vice, and the promotion of all those

principles which can alone engender vital godliness. He will rear a domestic altar, and at the rising and setting of the sun he will offer upon it the sacrifice of prayer and praise; a grateful tribute if presented through faith in the name of Christ Jesus. Both by precept and example he will shew to all around him how "they ought to walk and please God."

Where the head of the household thus manifests a regard for the welfare of those who are committed to his superintendence, his labours will not be ineffectual, though for a long time they may scarcely be perceptible; still the house shall not be destroyed, "for a blessing is in it." There will not only be an absence of all those broils and contentions so utterly subversive of domestic harmony; not only will order, regularity, and punctuality be visibly displayed in every department; but there will also be, in God's own appointed time, the germ of grace, fructifying and budding forth to the glory of God. The seed which the parental husbandman has so diligently scattered, having watered it with his prayers and tears, will not entirely be lost; he shall see of the travail of his soul in some awakened domestic, in some pious child, and shall be satisfied that he has not laboured in vain. Were we to trace the rise and progress of Christianity in the minds of those who are now eminently conspicuous for their piety, doubtless in many instances the stream would be discovered to have taken its origin in the house of their parents: there the fountain began to flow which is now fertilizing with its refreshing waters some barren spot in the wilderness. The lap of many a pious mother has given to the world some of the brightest gems of Christianity, which, after having diffused their lustre on all around them here below, will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Both scripture and experience warrant the conclusion, that sometimes the ungodly child is spared for the sake of its pious parents: that, as the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband, so God sometimes sanctifies the unbelieving offspring for the sake of its believing parents.

But we know in answer to this it may be said, that many unquestionably religious parents have to mourn over a very undutiful offspring; that no blessing seems to rest on their habitation; that their house is not ordered so with God as they could wish it. We readily admit the fact. Judging from external appearances, many would be ready to conclude that all these things are against them. Let not the fidelity of God, however, be called in question; nor let them be rash with their mouth to charge God foolishly. For their encouragement we can tell them, that many children who in early life gave promise of bringing down their parent's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, have at last become their crown of rejoicing. Arrested in his licentious career by the hand of an Omnipotent Saviour, many a spendthrift prodigal has been brought back to his father's house in the garb of penitential mourning, who has been welcomed to the parental embrace with these endearing accents—"This my son was lost and is found; was dead and is alive again;" so that from having sown the seed as he imagined upon the waters, he has been permitted to reap it again after many days. Where no such results arise, but iniquity marks the end, as it did the beginning, of some unhappy child, let parents look to themselves, lest in any measure his guilt be chargeable upon their heads, because, like Eli, "their sons have made themselves vile, and they have restrained them not." Certain it is that the promise has undergone no change; that "God is in the

generation of the righteous ;" that, as we have before observed, he " blesses the habitation of the just."

But the influence of the true Christian is felt beyond the limits of his own domestic enclosure, *it extends itself to all around him in the neighbourhood in which he dwells.* This is the third point of view in which to contemplate his character. As a city set on a hill cannot be hid, so the servant of God stands out to public gaze, an object of admiration to all whose eyes are not so blinded by infidelity or sin, as to turn with disgust from contemplating the beautiful impress of the image of God on the soul of man. He seems whithersoever he goes to purify the polluted atmosphere which he is constrained to breathe ; he diffuses a rich savour of godliness around him, which like the incense of the sacrifice, ascends up to heaven with a grateful odour. He is the salt of the earth. He is the channel of spiritual and temporal mercies to all who have the happiness of residing in his vicinity ; scattering with one hand the perishable treasures of the earth, with the other the unsearchable riches of Christ. Like the refreshing dew upon the thirsty land, he leaves a blessing behind him, diffusing the means of revival to those who are besotted in the arms of a spiritual slumber ; imparting fresh life to some who are dead in trespasses and sins. Whithersoever he goes, vice stands abashed at his approach, and strives to hide its head. He imposes a restraint upon youthful levity. He has a look or a word of rebuke or encouragement for his neighbours as their case may require, being ready to " weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice." To the afflicted sufferer his presence is hailed with delight, as the harbinger of good to soul and body. What Job somewhat arrogantly said of himself, may be applied to him : " When the ear heard him, then it blessed him, when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him : because he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him ; the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him." Well knowing the beneficial effects, by example, by conversation, by their alms, and by their prayers, which the righteous are capable of extending to their vicinity, our Lord gave it in command to his people, " that they should let their light so shine before men, that they might see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven."

It is impossible to calculate the good which one individual of piety may effect in that station of society in which he moves. He may set his face as a wall of brass against the iniquity by which he is surrounded. He may " lift up his voice like a trumpet" against all that is immoral in practice, or vicious in principle. Or else, by the influence of a mild and patient demeanour, he may put " to silence the ignorance of foolish men," and soften the violence of some perverse disputer. Or should he not be required to combat the enemy in the open field, he may retire within the camp, and there display the power of religion in sustaining the soul under the trials of mental or bodily anguish ; so that many, on beholding the loveliness and efficacy of religion, may be induced to say, " We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." There is no one so poor, or so ignorant, but he may, if such be his desire, contribute to promote the general welfare of society, and the glory of God.

But we pass on to consider, in the fourth place, that the righteous man is a blessing *to his country.* If it be true " that righteousness exalteth a nation," then every individual who is contributing to augment the measure of righteousness.

is contributing, in the same proportion, to promote the national prosperity. If he be a man of commanding influence, holding an exalted station either at the bar, the pulpit, or the senate; by the force of example, and the power of his eloquence, he may do much to effect a change in the moral and religious character of his country. He may diffuse throughout society a higher tone of Christianity; he may raise the standard of elevation, and procure for his countrymen the appellation of a "nation that fears God and worketh righteousness." Should he, on the other hand, tread only the humble walks of life, it is true that, in a national point of view, he can hope to contribute but a little to his country's welfare; but if only one talent has been committed to his custody, he is careful to improve it to the best advantage. Knowing that national religion is only an accumulation of individual piety, he endeavours, in the sphere in which he moves, to "adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in every thing." Thus he becomes a patriot in the best of senses; and desires to enrol his name among the list of those who, while they cultivate personal holiness, are contributing, at the same moment, to secure the foundation of their country. National prosperity can only be based on national religion; and national religion can only be created, as we have just observed, by individual piety. The Christian rejoices in thinking that, though small and of no reputation, he may, nevertheless, be made instrumental in delivering his country from the effects of divine indignation, justly provoked by our multiplied and magnified iniquities; for he rightly argues, that if God would have spared, in olden days, licentious Sodom, had it contained within its walls only ten righteous persons, why may not, in the present day, the salvation of his native land be made dependant on the same grounds? If God, for the elect's sake, will shorten the days of final tribulation, why may he not, for the same cause, shorten, or altogether avert, the days of present tribulation? Indeed, such is the tenor of God's reasoning with the sons of men. By the mouth of his prophet Jeremiah he says, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to pluck it up; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." Who can say that the preservation of this country may not be owing to the existence of so much piety within its borders? For notwithstanding the abounding of iniquity, and the overflowings of ungodliness which make us afraid, still there are not wanting those who "cry and sigh for the abominations of the land;" who are entreating the Lord to stay his avenging arm, and to sheath the sword of divine vengeance in the scabbard of his infinite love. If we can benefit our country in no other way, still we may pray for it. Whether, then, in his public or private capacity; at home or abroad; as a parent or citizen; whether he be poor, or whether he be rich; in his going out and coming in, the righteous man is a *blessing*.

Who, then, does not ardently desire to be thus happy in himself, thus serviceable to his fellow-creatures, thus honoured of God? Methinks I hear some person exclaim, "Hast thou but one blessing? bless me, even me also, O my Father." God grant that it may be so; for my text involves one important consideration, that if we are not a *blessing*, we must be a *curse* to ourselves, to our neighbours, and to our country.

It requires no argument to prove—unless, indeed, we disbelieve the Scriptures,



in which case all argument would be useless—that the wicked man is a curse to himself. The curse of God is pronounced upon him, and he is preparing for himself all the instruments of eternal vengeance. But the influence of this wickedness extends, not only to the culprit himself, but to the neighbourhood in which he lives, to the country which he inhabits. If we could only ascertain the sum total of misery which has been created directly and indirectly by the sayings and doings of one ungodly man, it would not be more astonishing than appalling. The vicious man must have associates and partners in his guilt. Where do we find a solitary drunkard? The very name implies association. His object is by every artifice to place the cup of intoxication before his friend and neighbour. Take the licentious libertine: his very breath is pestilential; he seems to contaminate every thing within his reach; the poison of asps is under his lips; the ruin of souls and bodies is his delight. To corrupt unsuspecting innocence is the object for which he seems to live; he glories in the number of his victims, and with fiendish triumph, points them out as the trophies of his successful villainy. He makes it his sport to raise a senseless laugh against religion; to ridicule every thing that is serious and sacred; and thinks it a mark of superior wisdom boldly to avow his impiety, to pronounce the Bible a fable of cunning device. Such a man is a demon upon the earth; he caters for hell. He is a curse upon the neighbourhood: but he is more, he is a curse to his country. In the same proportion that the righteous man is the preservation of his country, so is the unrighteous man its destruction. He is using all his influence to demoralize the inhabitants, to undermine their religious principles, to unchristianize the land, thus contributing to complete the measure of its iniquity: when that is effected, judgment will inevitably follow. It is a common observation respecting a certain class of ungodly persons that they are no one's enemies but their own. This, however, is not true. They are enemies to society; they are enemies to their country; they are enemies to their God.

How fearful, then, is this consideration—there lives not a man upon the earth, who, in some shape or other, is not a blessing or a curse; not a child who now hears me, who is not a blessing or curse to its parents; not a parent who is not a blessing or curse to his children. How anxiously should we all inquire what position we hold in society: whether by our example we are contributing to augment the armies of the living God or are multiplying the number of those who are confederate against Him! To stand neuter is impossible. “He who is not with me,” says Christ, “is against me.” “Who is on the Lord's side?” Let him display his banners; put on the armour of God, and fight under the cross. O, how anxious should we all be to become a blessing!

But before this can be effected, we ourselves must be blessed by God; this is the grand principle of becoming a blessing to others. Who then are the characters, the subjects of the divine benediction? The Psalmist has thus described them: “Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Being then reconciled to God, through faith in the atoning blood of his dear Son Jesus Christ, the effects of the curse will entirely be removed from our guilty heads; a new creation will take place in our souls; the love of God which, in consequence, will be shed abroad in our own hearts, will operate as a constraining motive to love our fellow creatures. Having so freely and fully experienced the blessings of providence and of grace, we shall labour to impart them to

others. Having felt the burden of sin removed from our own shoulders, and "laid on Him who has borne the iniquity of us all," we shall earnestly desire to introduce others to the same Redeemer, who alone can set at liberty the sin-bound captive. Cheered and animated by the Sun of Righteousness shining into our own bosoms, we shall endeavour, as from a mirror, to reflect its rays on all around us; to bring all within the circumference of its hallowed beams. "Come thou with us and we will do thee good," will be the language of our invitation. Freely having received, we shall endeavour as freely to give—whether from the stores of our pecuniary or spiritual treasury; we shall rejoice in every opportunity of promoting the glory of God, and the benefit of man.

Thus it is that from having been watered by the dew of God's blessing, we shall seek to water others also; like the moisture in Gideon's fleece, while all was dry around it, we shall endeavour to become the refreshing source of life to our perishing neighbours. And in this luxurious employment we shall be stimulated to more holy and renewed exertions, by the example of the gracious Redeemer, in whom was centred the perfection of blessedness. See him incessantly occupied in perambulating the cities and villages, diffusing out of his fulness, to all who were willing to receive him, some token of his divine authority. See disease flying before his touch. See the devils trembling at his approach; see the dead springing into life. See him preaching the Gospel tidings to the perishing poor: see him everywhere enforcing his precepts by his practice, going about doing good. Gaze upon this picture until you imbibe something of the spirit of Christ, and feel your hearts glowing with an ardent desire to go forth and do likewise, as far as imitation of this bright example is permitted to man.

Behold, then, this day, I have set before you a blessing and a curse: life and death. One or the other you must choose—neutrality is impracticable. When I cast my eyes around this congregation, and see of how much good it may be productive, from the least of its members to the greatest; that the parent may be a blessing to the child, and the child to the parent; the master to the servant, and the servant to the master; the minister to his hearers, and the hearers to the minister; that all of us may contribute, in some degree, to promote the welfare of the neighbourhood in which we reside, I would propose to enter into this solemn compact—that when we retire from these walls, we should each of us resolve to do something more than we have hitherto done, for the service of our fellow-creatures, and the glory of God; remembering that the "poor we have always with us, and whosoever we will we may do them good." We desire nothing more ardently than that it may be recorded of us, of this chapel, of this people—that they are a blessing to the vicinity in which they are placed; that here, as from a fountain, may flow the waters of consolation and salvation, which are to make glad this part of our city, that here, too, the bread of life may be broken and distributed to the famishing multitude; so that it may be apparent to all "that this is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven." "Therefore now," in the words of David, with which we conclude, "let it please thee, O Lord, to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee; and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever."

## THE DEATH OF THE CHRISTIAN COMPARED TO SLEEP.

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REV. J. PARSONS.

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“Concerning them that are asleep.”—1 THESSALONIANS, iv. 13.

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“ONE generation passeth away, and another generation cometh.” Such, my brethren, is the comprehensive and emphatical annunciation of the law under which the whole of our species is placed, and in the execution of which its entire destiny is fulfilled. The tenants of the globe are occupied in one incessant and regular course of change; some advance, and some retire; some are invigorated, and some decay; some are created, and some perish: and in this striking and regular alternation do human affairs proceed, until there shall arrive the period which has been appointed in the divine councils, when the universal Ruler will consummate all things, and distribute on those who have lived the unalterable allotments of eternity.

Who, my brethren, can look and deeply ponder upon the various mutations which have occurred in past ages, and which are occurring now, but with surpassing interest, and with solemnity of heart? To be indifferent and reckless amidst the contemplation of scenes like these, is unnatural and monstrous indeed. The longer it pleases God to continue any individual being in the present world, the more, of course, he becomes a personal witness of the various mutations which transpire amongst the species to which we belong. Whilst minor changes are constantly wrought upon, and observed in those who are permitted to exist, the number is continually augmenting upon whom takes place the performance of the last great and final change of death. He finds that gradually he is surrounded by the monuments of departed generations: and if he render to his contemplations their proper range, and if he impart to his emotions their proper exercise, he soon makes the discovery that the spirit is made to dwell more in communion with the dead than with the living. My brethren, how touching the contemplation! and who can engage in it without deducing the salutary lessons which will prepare him for the time when he himself must die?

My brethren, it is to be observed, there are some of the departed around whom there gathers a peculiar interest and beauty: I mean, the departed upon whom the allotment of death comes in its form of mildness and gentleness, the late infliction being overcome by the energies of the divine kindness and grace. This, you observe, was the state of those persons to whom the Apostle has been now referring, when he addressed the Thessalonian believers: “Concerning them that are asleep;” persons whom they had once known in the flesh, and in the Lord, who had gone to their graves, and with regard to whom it was ore

of the most animating declarations which the whole of the Inspired Writings contain. Not a few, my brethren, of those who are now in this assembly—and he who speaks is among the number—have, more recently or more remotely, been affected by those visitations; which have bereft us of persons whom, on the highest principles, we have revered and loved. If we are spared a little longer within the sphere of the present life, we must expect these bereavements to be continued and increased. The Church of Christ has recently lost many of its brightest lights: the champion of India, and the champion of China, have been called away to receive their eternal reward. Believing that that course of feeling cannot but be naturally and properly excited, both by relative and public events, it cannot but be profitable for us to engage to-night in some contemplations “concerning them that are asleep;” knowing that just in proportion as we embrace and receive the truths which are contained in the illustration of the Apostle, our own interests shall be secured, and we shall be happy for ever.

Let me request your patient and silent attention while we occupy your regards in attending to the three following inquiries. First: For whom is death so softened that it may be represented as a state of sleep? Secondly: What illustrations does the representation of death as a state of sleep afford with regard to the condition of the departed? Thirdly: What influence ought the representation of death as a state of sleep, to produce upon the minds of the living? “Concerning them that are asleep.”

First, we propose to inquire, FOR WHOM DEATH IS SO SOFTENED AND MITIGATED AS JUSTLY TO BE REPRESENTED AS A STATE OF SLEEP?

We will observe, my brethren, that the phrase by which death is here represented is, unquestionably, intended to import, and to state to us, that it is so softened and mitigated, and that to a considerable extent it is deprived and stripped of the terrors by which, on usual occasions, it is surrounded. We are aware that comparisons between death and sleep frequently signify nothing more than that there is a resemblance between the two in external and physical circumstances; but when the comparison is applied as it is in the language of the text, and also in other portions of divine revelation, we cannot but observe that it signifies the fact of an extraordinary relief in the infliction of the final penalty: and the text announces with regard to those persons, that death has undergone a change so great and complete, that it is no longer worthy of being designated by its proper and original name. The question, my friends, therefore, becomes important, and is now to be attended to, Who are those persons on whose behalf the change has been made, and for whose welfare the relief has been afforded?

And, my hearers, none amongst you for a moment will suppose that the representation of mitigation and softening which is now brought before us, is to be considered as the indiscriminate and universal allotment of all mankind. It is for those—and, my hearers, it is for those *alone*—who, by the Spirit of God, have been able to repent towards him; who, by the same Spirit, have believed upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; and who, in consequence of the appointed instrumentality of their faith, have received the imputation of his righteousness, and a personal interest in those various blessings which his mediation was intended to secure. You will, therefore, observe that, in the



following verse, the Apostle speaks of those who "sleep in Jesus;" those who believed in him, and those who were vitally and spiritually united to him. And the same truth is distinctly and powerfully expressed in other portions of the Sacred Writings, as you must recollect. Let me remind you, that the only warrant and assurance that our own prospects for death and eternity shall be cheered by the light and the gladness of mercy and grace, is to be found in the fact, that we "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord; and do count them but dung, that we may win Christ, and be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." It is "he that believeth," my brethren, that is entitled to the enjoyment of the blessing; and he who relies not upon Christ Jesus, has no part, and has no lot in the matter.

We must now explain further, that the precise order by which, to those who rely on the merits of the Lord and Saviour, death undergoes that softening influence which is placed before us, is, *by the influence of the Saviour's death, and by the influence of the Saviour's resurrection*. The whole of these two great events is applied to the welfare of those who believe; and in them is the security of their final joy. We speak, my brethren, for example, of the Saviour's *death*. That death was strictly an atonement, a propitiatory sacrifice for the transgressions of the world, intended to bear away the guilt of sin on behalf of all those who should believe upon His name, and absolve them from the penal consequences and final punishment which sin has richly deserved. We, therefore, find it stated that "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree:" that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Now, my hearers, the terrors of death to man arise entirely from man's liability to the curse. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." If, then, the guilt of sin, which alone invites and incurs the malediction of the law, be removed and borne away by the sacrifice of Christ, by the same sacrifice the sting of death must also be borne away; and there must be an influence exerted over it, so that it shall torment and injure no more. It is, therefore, a beautiful record of the Apostle, with regard to the influence of the Saviour's sacrifice, that "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage."

Again, my brethren, while we speak of the Saviour's death, we must also speak of the Saviour's *resurrection*. On the third day he broke the bars of death, and came forth "declared to be the Son of God with power." The resurrection of our Lord Jesus from the dead, was his own personal conquest over death: it was the solemn testimony of the all-sufficiency and acceptance in heaven of the sacrifice which was offered for his people: and it was also a public proof that, on the part of his people, he had triumphed over and spoiled the principalities and powers of darkness; who hold their domination no more for the curse and malediction of mankind: and it was his preparation for that state of mediatorial empire, and that work of mediatorial intercession, which is to continue till the appointed period, when all his saints are to be assimilated

to his own image, and brought to the perfection of heaven. The resurrection of the Saviour must be regarded as exercising a most important influence in securing the well-being of millions, and the final happiness of those who are redeemed. Thus, therefore, says the Apostle—"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

I shall not, my friends, attempt to detain your attention at greater length in reference to these two great events, the Saviour's death, and the Saviour's resurrection. I will only observe, that when you regard their influence as they are presented to you in the Book of God, and as we have thus endeavoured to explain them, you will see how it is death may become softened to those who are interested in them, and how the hour of Christian dissolution can be nothing but the hour of Christian security, and the hour of Christian joy. Yes, my brethren; for those who have believed in the work of the Saviour, the glorious work has been done: for them he has grappled with the King of Terrors; he has plucked the crown from his brow; he has levelled and prostrated the towering elevation of his throne; he has snapped his sceptre in sunder; with his own blood he has washed away the poison from his dart; and, binding him at his feet as a captive, he has exposed him now as the wreck of what he once was; now a most benign servant, now a messenger of good for the purposes of sovereign mercy: and, in due time, at the bidding of final determination, death itself shall be no more; it shall be crushed, annihilated for ever. "The last enemy which is destroyed is death;" and then shall "mortality be swallowed up of life."

We have employed your attention thus far on what may be regarded as the preliminary part of the subject, in order to understand who those persons—and to examine whether you yourselves be numbered amongst those persons—who those persons are for whom a mitigating influence is exercised over the energies of death: those who believe upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; and those to whom, through faith, the merit of his atoning death and his triumphant resurrection are applied. Let us now proceed to the second part of our subject, and inquire, **WHAT ILLUSTRATIONS DOES THIS REPRESENTATION OF DEATH AS SLEEP AFFORD, AS TO THE CONDITION OF THE DEPARTED?**

It is very important for us, my brethren, at the outset, to remind you with carefulness, that when believers who are dead are represented as being in a state of sleep, it is not because they should be represented as being in a state of unconsciousness. I am aware that not a few affirm such to be the fact, and that many, professing to admit the immortality of the soul, yet state their belief that there is a perfect suspension of all thought and of all feeling, until the arrival of the last resurrection of the dead. The refutation of this opinion appears to us necessarily to arise from all just and philosophical investigations as to the nature, the laws, and the mutual relation of mind and of matter. And when we refer to the Sacred Writings, we find they render their most beautiful and decisive testimony to the fact, that although death does putrefy, and separate, and decompose, and pulverize the body, yet it leaves the soul in a state of actual and conscious being, capable of exercising its high mental faculties, and susceptible both of retributive pleasure and of retributive pain, into the enjoyment and endurance of which it is at once and instantly introduced.

Were I to give you a brief reference to the testimony of the Sacred Writings on this important subject, I would remind you of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus ; with regard to which it must be evident that, even admitting the characters are fictitious, yet the doctrines taught with regard to those characters must, of necessity, be true. We find it stated that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom : that the rich man died, and was buried, and in hell lifted up his eyes, being in torment. And this is to be regarded as the instantaneous effect of their dissolution, because we find the intercession of the rich man in behalf of his brethren who were yet living on earth, to whom he desired a messenger from the dead might be sent "lest they also should come into this place of torment." If that testimony stood alone, it would be perfectly decisive and clear. We remind you again of the promise of our Redeemer to the thief upon the cross : "Verily, I say unto thee, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.'" We remind you of the anticipation of the Apostle Paul : "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord : (for we walk by faith, not by sight :) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." We remind you again of his own statement with regard to himself, where he expresses his "earnest expectation and his hopes, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death." "For me," says he, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour : yet what I shall choose I wot not, for," says he, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better : nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." We remind you again of his reference to the spirits of just men that are made perfect. And the book of Revelations also gives to us a beautiful statement of the separate state of enjoyment : as it does also a solemn statement of the condition of misery, long before the sounding of the trumpet, and the calling of the bodies of the dead to judgment.

Assuming, my brethren, the truth and justice of the various representations which have now been presented, we must then ask for some other illustration of the figure of sleep, as applied to the state of departed believers ; and we shall request your attention to three illustrations, by which you will perceive their state elucidated with extraordinary and exquisite beauty.

First, we represent the figure of sleep, as applied to departed believers, to illustrate *their repose*. We know of corporeal sleep, "tired nature's calm restorer," that wondrous and merciful ordination of Him whom we call the God of nature, that it is a season of quiet repose, when the faculties that have been wearied by exertion are at ease and rest. Now, my brethren, death, to the believer, through the medium of Jesus, is as the beginning of repose after the labour of the day ; for life to him is as a day of toil. You will remember how beautifully the idea of repose is connected with the idea of death, in the language of Christ, in the conversation with his disciples respecting the departure of Lazarus. "Jesus saith unto them," when he said he should go into Judea again, "Are there not twelve hours in the day ? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth because there is no light in him. These

things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of his sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead." My brethren, all the demands and all the characteristics which attach to Christians in the present state of existence, are those of toil and labour. For example: we are to walk, we are to run, we are to plant, we are to sow, we are to reap, we are to build, we are to watch, we are to wrestle, we are to fight, we are to climb, we are to press forward. Whether we occupy the more public and honourable stations which belong to the Church of Christ, or whether we exist in more ordinary and less responsible positions, we all know that our's is a hard toilsome course. The task of resisting the propensities of our own indwelling sin—the task of enduring the various afflictive dispensations which are imposed upon us by divine providence—the task of bearing the obloquy, the scorn, the persecution, in various forms, of ungodly men—the task of contending against the rulers of darkness—the task of acquiring the higher ultimate attainments of Christian knowledge, of Christian holiness—and the task of attempting to persevere against the depravity of man, and advancing the kingdom of our Redeemer, even unto the ends of the earth; this, my brethren, constitutes our work—work that we are to do with all our might; and except we do it we cannot work out our own salvation, nor rightly honour the Redeemer whom we profess to serve. But when we have finished, as hirelings, our day, when we die, or when we "sleep," in Jesus, it is as going to our rest: the body rests in its grave; the soul rests in the paradise of the Lord, surrounded by the elements of a sweet and balmy tranquillity, that cannot be ruffled or disturbed. Are we labourers? Then we leave the field and lay down the implements of our husbandry. Are we travellers? Then we terminate our long and wearisome journey, and cross the threshold of our Father's mansion. Are we soldiers? Then we take off the helmet, and the corslet, and the entire panoply, and lay down the weapons of defence or of assault, the spear, and the shield, and the sword. Are we mariners? Then we heave over the last ocean-billow, and enter the desired haven. The sleep of the labouring man is sweet; and O how sweet is the slumber and last repose of those who have believed in Jesus, and who have wrought for God! No sufferings, no cares, no uneasy recollections, or boding anticipations disturb. There is no affrighting dream, no unearthly night-mare, to spoil or mar that placid rest: every jarring noise is hushed; the winds are still; no heavy tread, no loud tumults, no alarm cry, no trumpet sounds startle; all nature pays a deference and a tribute of silence whilst the Christian sleeps. "They enter into peace, and they sleep in their beds, each one who has walked in uprightness." "There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God." "I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Write, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." How happy, my brethren, for you and for me, if as Christians we labour, that as Christians we shall rest, when we shall have fallen asleep

Secondly: this figure of sleep also illustrates *their security*. The season of slumber is assumed to be a season of security. No man, in ordinary cases



would commit himself to the one, except he was assured that he could also calculate on the other. The Christian would not be the possessor of rest, if he were not the possessor of security. And we need scarcely remind you, that when the time has come for his spirit to enter into a state of immortality, it is secure and it is safe for ever. Security, my brethren, is that which, in invulnerable power, ever surrounds all who believe upon the name of the Son of God. Never would I, for a single moment, attempt to qualify, or to equivocate upon, the doctrine of that perfect security with which they are environed who are the called according to the purpose of God, both in this life, and in the life that is to come. Saith the Redeemer, as you remember, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." And, again, saith the Saviour's servant: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The departure of believers is a transition to the chosen mansions, and to the immediate presence of their Lord. And what storm can disturb there? And what sorrow can harass there? And what foe can endanger there? You might as well think of the insecurity of Christ as think of the insecurity of his people: if He be safe, so are *they*; if He be dignified, so are *they*; if He be happy so are *they*. The same allotments, the same residence, the same honour, are the property of both: "Because I live, ye shall live also."

But, my brethren, in speaking of the security in which they are involved who live and who die in the Lord, we must not omit to notice, that while there is security to their spirits in the paradise of their Redeemer, there is also *a security to their bodies in their graves*. Peradventure, my brethren, we pay too little attention to the recollection of this great fact—as to the security of the corporeal frame of those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. My hearers, not only has the soul been redeemed, but the *body* has been redeemed also. For what else is the import of the Apostle's language when he says, that "We who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body?" And again, the passage where he says, "Ye are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession"—the "purchased possession" being the body—"unto the praise of his glory." Yes, my brethren, the dust of every Christian is sacred: it matters not where that dust shall be laid. It matters not if it repose not in ancestral dwellings, and in ancestral sepulchres. It matters not that it be buried in foreign and far-distant climes, amidst strangers and aliens, where there is no friend to close the eye, or to mourn by the bier. It matters not that it be down in the abyss of the deep and unfathomed ocean, unknelled,

unconfined, and unknown. It matters not if it becomes mixed with the ashes of the funeral pile, and be scattered to the four winds of heaven. There is an Eye that watches it; there is a Mind that knows it; there is a Power that protects it; and not one of those who have been bought by his blood shall be found wanting at the appointed time of revival and of glory.

“ God our Redeemer lives,  
And often, from the skies,  
Looks down and watches all our dust,  
Till he shall bid it rise.”

And O, my brethren, what boundings of heart should we have towards Him whose mercy has not forgotten the clay tenement in which has been the precious pearl of the soul; and who destines both to be made partakers of the inheritance of his kingdom and glory!

But, thirdly, it will be observed, that the image of sleep also illustrates *their prospect of restoration*. When men lie down to sleep, it is with the prospect of waking again in the enjoyment of renovated and recreated vigour: and when we find the figure of sleep associated with the destinies of believers, we cannot but perceive it to be associated with their prospect of joyous and final restoration. We have made some partial allusion already to the final resurrection of the body. The event of the body's resurrection is that which the Apostle especially has in view in connexion with the words of the text: “For,” says he, “if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” If you turn to other parts of Scripture, you will find how beautiful the image of sleep is connected with the doctrine of the final resurrection, as the time of awakening. For example, take the language of David: “As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness;” referring to the resurrection of the dead. Take the language of Daniel: “Many of them”—or *the* many of them—“that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Take the language of the Saviour: when he was speaking of the daughter of Jairus he said, “The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth;” and this because he was going to raise her from the dead. When he spake of Lazarus he said, “Our friend sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep;” and this because he was about to raise him from the dead. When we hear the narrative of the saints that arose after the resurrection of the Saviour, we find it said, “Many bodies of the saints which slept arose.” And if you turn to 1 Corinthians, xv., you will there observe, how the Apostle argues upon this figure to a very considerable extent, and with beautiful emphasis and power. “If,” says he, “Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up

Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead." The connexion, therefore, of the figure of sleep, is perfectly and decisively clear.

And now, my brethren, what will that final resurrection accomplish with regard to those who have been asleep? That great event will, in the first place, *invest the bodies of believers with ineffable dignity and splendour*. I am not, my brethren, about to speculate on what the body to be raised from the dead, shall be: I know not the precise forms which shall be assumed by *you*, and *you*, who go down to the grave, which has been hallowed by the conquest of the Saviour. But this I do know, and so also do you yourselves, from the testimony of revelation, that the Lord Jesus Christ "shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." If you turn to that wonderfully sublime passage in which the great doctrine of the future resurrection is exhibited, you find, my brethren, these terms, which we cannot read without high and thrilling emotion of heart: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. And so it is written: The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Aye, my brethren, and now there is no darkness that gathers over the sepulchre: you might go and stand by the hollow house, where you yourself shall lie, and, instead of starting back again to life,

"Fond of your prison and your clay,"

wish almost that the time of decomposition and ruin had come, as hastening the time when thus you shall be recovered and restored.

"Arrayed in glorious grace,  
 Shall these vile bodies shine;  
 And every shape, and every face,  
 Be heavenly and divine."

O, thanks be unto God for this his unspeakable gift!

And then, again, my brethren, this great event of restoration may be connected with *the communication of still higher and more ecstatic pleasures of the soul*. There are not a few in connexion with the Christian Church, who seem to consider there is somewhat of discrepancy or contradiction in the doctrine of a separate state of consciousness, and in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead: and it has been asked, if there be a separate state of happiness for the soul, apart from the body, do we not, while we admit that fact, seem, in some measure, to turn away from the testimony and importance of the resurrection of the dead? My own view, my brethren, upon the subject, is this—The soul while existing in a state separate from the body, after the event of death, and before the event of the resurrection, receives only those pleasures which are derived from memory, from reflection, or from anticipation; faculties which it may easily and constantly work upon and employ without the agency, and without the assistance, of the body. When the soul becomes united to the body at the time of the last resurrection, it receives, in addition to the pleasures of memory, reflection, and anticipation, those other pleasures which arise from observation, and from communication with external and material beings and objects. We know, my brethren, how much of our pleasure in the present world consists in our power of holding intercourse with other beings, and observing other objects. And we can calculate, in some measure, without difficulty, what will be the amount of increased pleasure to the glorified spirit, when, in addition to the pleasures of memory, reflection, and anticipation, it possesses also the power of holding intercourse through a refined and spiritualized body, with those beings and those objects which are congregated in the heaven of heavens. But whether, my brethren, this view of the case be correct or not (and I desire not to speak by commandment, but by permission), this much is certain, that, no doubt, when the body shall be raised, and the people of Christ, before his tribunal, shall receive, in the presence of the assembled world, the recognition of their characters, and the consummation of their glory, God will shower upon them the highest and best blessings, which the treasures of his omnipotence and mercy can impart; then will they receive the last communications of the celestial recompense; and, dwelling in the heaven of heavens, in the full and beatific vision of Him who sitteth on the throne will they possess "the fulness of joy," and those "pleasures" which are "for evermore." This, my brethren is the consummation of the state of "them that are asleep."

We now, my brethren, shall, very briefly, employ you on the third and last inquiry arising from the interesting words before us: **WHAT INFLUENCE SHOULD THESE REPRESENTATIONS, AS TO THE STATE OF THE DEPARTED, PRODUCE UPON THE LIVING?** It was intended by the Apostle, clearly, that certain practical influences upon those who live, should be stamped and sealed by the view of the case of those who are gone. I must request, my brethren, your very devout attention, while I notice the following three.



In the first place, in consequence of this view of the state of the departed *we ought not to indulge excessive grief on account of those Christian friends whom it has been, or whom it may yet be, our lot to lose.* There was a dark influence on the bereavement, otherwise, upon those to whom he addressed himself. They were grieving, probably, inordinately, for the loss of those who had departed: "But," says he, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." And then, when he states this prospect of restoration, in the verse we have read, he concludes, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." And again: "Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."

Let us apply this delightful exhortation to ourselves. We, who are now in the presence of God, have felt many losses. As members of the Church of God we have been bereaved. Our missionaries have gone, and those who have been, as it were, the vanguard of the armies of the Lord, in order to introduce those armies by a yet unbeaten path, into a land which has been covered with the gigantic powers of heathenism, under the guidance of the god of this world, have been called away to their rest. And it is but recently, with regard to the mighty population in the hitherto hermetically sealed empire of China, we have to lament like the sons of the prophet, that our master has been taken away from our head to-day. We have lost, my brethren, our pastors. Do you not remember many, under whose voice you sat with delight, and to whose tidings you listened with advantage; that voice now being silent, and those tidings being now repeated by another. And speak I not to many, who may look at this marble\*, and who can scarce gaze upon it but with throbbing heart and with tearful eye? "Our fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever?" And we have lost, my brethren, our friends: we have gone into the death chamber; we have gazed upon the corpse; we have seen the chill, changeless brow—the sad, shrouded eye—the cold, pallid cheek. We have looked upon the fringe of the shroud, and upon the melancholy of the tinselled coffin. We have followed in the funeral procession; we have stood by the yawning of the open grave: we have heard the rattling of the dust as it fell on the deposit of the dead, and heard the sound, "Dust to dust, ashes to ashes:" and the dead were "buried out of our sight:" and we have come back to the silent and desolate homes, where the loved ones were not, and never, never can be again. And yet, my brethren, it becomes us not to grieve as those who have no hope. Where are they? Is it not true that they are at rest? Is it not true they are secure? Is it not true that their very flesh is made to "rest in hope?" Is it not true that in due time they shall come forth again in the splendours of a living immortality, to suffer and to die no more? Then, brethren, let us moderate the grief of the heart, and wipe each tear-drop from the eye. Let us commit them placidly, without extravagant sorrow, to the place where they sleep in Jesus; and, comforting ourselves in the recollection of their happiness, let us follow the path which they have trod, being "followers of them who now, through faith and patience, do inherit the promises."

Secondly: such, my brethren, being the condition of the departed, *it becomes us as Christians not to dread the arrival of death for ourselves.* There are

\* The Tablet to the Memory of the REV. ROWLAND HILL.

many amongst you, my Christian brethren, who have often feared death. Retire to-night, and meditate—What is it? It is nothing but falling asleep. Could you tremble when, at the hour of midnight, you go to the couch of repose, and draw the curtains around you, and close your eyelids, and commit yourselves to the oblivion of sweet and restoring slumber? Why, my brethren, should we fear the last sleep, when that sleep places us especially in circumstances of repose and security, with the prospect of a joyous restoration? My brethren, I should like to-night, as a messenger for eternity, to arouse you, as true believers in Jesus, to the high attitude of courage and of majesty, with which you are enabled to anticipate the hour, the moment of dissolution, when you shall fall, and your spirits shall wend their way to immortality. One thing alone is required—that you should ascertain your interest in Christ, and have the witness of the Spirit with your spirits, that you are the children of God: and when that is done, all is done, and death is to be feared no more. No, my brethren, then should you look him in the face, as he comes with the heavy tramp of malignant fury to strike you down, and, as his dart gleams in his uplifted hand, bare your bosom for the blow, and exclaim, “Strike! I fear thee not. Strike! for thou art conquered. Strike! for thou art but a commissioned messenger of mercy, to herald me to my Lord. Strike!” And as the frame-work of the clay falls beneath the blow which you invite, your last song of tremulous triumph shall be, “Fall, fall, frail mansion; for I know, that when the earthly house of my tabernacle is dissolved, I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

And, finally, my brethren, let this view of the condition of the departed impress upon us *the propriety of desiring the same consummation for ourselves*. For while, my brethren, I have spoken to many who can look to the prospect of falling asleep, there are many around us, with *no* prospect of sleeping in Jesus. Their bodies will be dissolved, it is true; those bodies will be interred, it is true. It may be, the funeral crowd shall follow them; and that they may repose in the sculptured mausoleum, and beneath the pageantry of wealth and flattery. But, ah, my hearers! where will be that immortal spirit, which must render an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad? You who have not repented, you, who have not believed, you are *to die*; you are *to die soon*; you may die *to-night*: this very place may be, as it were, hung round with the emblems of the funeral for you: the messenger may have gone forth, the arm uplifted, the arrow sharpened, the poison placed upon it; and even *now* it may be winging to strike you into the dust of death. Aye, and you can retire from these portals to-night, and mingle in the common contemptible avocations of a perishing world, recking not whether you shall be saved or lost, whether you shall be glorified or damned. My fellow sinners, you have heard the tidings of life and immortality to-night: I beseech you that you do not depart from the service which now terminates, without presenting yourselves, as humble suppliants, at the footstool of the Divine Majesty: praying that He would prepare you, by repentance and by faith, for the moment of death, and for the enjoyments of immortality. O, what an invaluable treasure is within these walls to-night! There is not one anywhere who has not a soul, in comparison of which, diadems, and empires, and worlds are as nothing: and if one soul be thus precious, what must be the preciousness of all these souls!

Wonder not, my brethren, that I am intense. I am not mad. I speak the words of truth and soberness: and did I to-night fling the very essence of life, as a sacrifice for the salvation of these deathless spirits, it would not be beyond what the majesty of the subject requires. Sinners! now you may be lost if you please; but go and remember, that your damnation is your own act, and that you have struck a suicide upon your souls. Of one thing I am determined, and there are many that will follow me—to go again to the altar of atonement, to remember, in deep humility, that I have need of mercy: and there to seek a new application of the power of the death, and of the power of the resurrection; and entreat to be kept faithful unto death, that I may receive the crown of life. “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” And let all the people say, “Amen.”

## GOD THE AUTHOR OF SALVATION.

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REV. T. MYERS, A.M.

ST. PETER'S CHURCH, CORNHILL, FEBRUARY 1, 1835.

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"Salvation belongeth unto the Lord."—PSALM iii. 8.

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IF there be one word which should suggest unto fallen man thoughts of more intense interest than another, it is the word "Salvation." Were we conscious of the full extent of our wanderings from the pathway of holiness, we should be surprised at the loving-kindness which hath revealed it to us. While it is eloquent of deliverance, it reminds us of ruin. It raises us indeed by the whisperings of hope, but then it humbles us by the discovery of our wretchedness. And if we dwell upon the history of man the civilized, or man the savage, and gather notices of the open defiance with which he treats the authority of God—of the recklessness with which he breaks God's commandments, and the misery which it delights him to bring upon his fellows—then might feelings of astonishment well nigh overwhelm us, that such beings as we are should be blessed with the visitings of mercy. God's goodness, we know, and his wisdom spread themselves as a mantle over every the least work of his fashioning; but it may be that in man's case alone, is displayed the putting forth of his mercy. We are taught by the Almighty that all the costly things of creation could never equal in value one human soul—that spark lit up by Deity when breathing upon dust; thence we can well understand that he hath ever watched it with a ceaseless guardianship, and would not suffer it to go down to perdition, without providing for its rescue and offering it deliverance. Grandeur there is, and majesty, in those golden lamps which are hung about the firmament; but were an eclipse to go forth upon each one of their shinings, the darkness would be nothing to that occasioned by the crushing one rebellious soul. Its very preciousness was turned, as it were, by mercy in its favour; and thus it became possible that the rebel one, and the guilty, should be cheered by tidings of salvation.

And when we further call to mind what this word includes—not merely escape from wrath, but partnership in triumph; not merely rescue from captivity, but admission to sonship; not merely the rolling away of the curse, but the shedding down of the blessing—then may we naturally wonder that this message of gladness is so neglected by mankind. "Salvation" is a word of such frequent utterance, that it falls upon our ears as an idle thing, and a worthless. We have heard it repeated so often, from the days of childhood, through the years of manhood, that familiarity with the sound hath taken off much of impression from the sense. Hence, there is much necessity that the heralds of its mysteries should, from time to time, present the same truths under a variety of aspects,



and to mingle the oldness of matter, and the newness of manner; that the attention being arrested by what is pleasing, the heart may be impressed by what is profitable. Wheresoever we turn, whatsoever we survey, all, *with one single exception*, “belongeth unto the Lord.” If we could perform what David could only desire—if we could hasten away from one gorgeous world unto another, and could gather within a glance the endless retinue of star, and sun, and planet, we could never gaze upon the minutest atom which belongeth not unto Jehovah. *Sin* is the only workmanship throughout creation which He fashioned not. Angel hath disobeyed, and man hath disobeyed. Through sin, God’s image on man’s soul hath become sepulchred in dust; and it is just because this stain is upon it, and this pollution is upon it, which belong not unto the Creator—that we have this day to announce to you the means of its restoration, as belonging exclusively unto the Lord.

The subject, then, to which we would direct your remaining meditations is, *God’s plan of saving sinners*; and we would attempt to lead your devotions by explaining simply the separate offices of God the *Father, Son, and Spirit*, in *devising, executing, and applying, salvation*: thus showing how in each case we arrive at David’s conclusion, that “Salvation belongeth unto the Lord.” And may that Almighty One in whom we trust, be with us, and guide us securely away from all error, and lead us safely into all truth!

That was an hour of melancholy sadness when the woman gave unto the man “and he did eat.” The act itself was neither holy nor unholy, but it was breaking a command: and hence an outward proof of the state of feeling within. The state of mind into which Adam must have passed before he could venture to taste or to touch; here was the sin—here the disobedience. We may search through the length and breadth of creation for an excuse for Adam, and can find none. He was not over-mastered by superior cunning; he, says St. Paul, “was not deceived.” He was surrounded by all that could minister to his longings: he held communings with all that could strengthen his allegiance; he was warned against all that could seduce him from holiness. He was created free to stand, and free to fall—perfectly holy, yet capable of sinning—(for you will instantly perceive that there can be no holiness in any being without the power of transgressing.) Like ourselves, he could be biassed by opposing motives; being sustained by direct ministrings of loftier spirits, yet not completely warded off from the assailings of evil ones. Had it been impossible for him to disobey, then would his freedom from iniquity be nothing but a mockery of obedience. We hold, however, that though Adam fell, the Almighty set up a sufficient defence around him to keep him from falling; so that upon himself alone must be laid all the guilt of the fall. He was not placed in any wild and thorny region, ignorant of the destinies committed to his keeping, or of the foes by which he was surrounded. He was in every sense, self destroyed. As the Almighty had nothing to do with his wandering away into the desert, so it is, entirely of free mercy if ever he be invited back to the fold. And alas! sorrow and sighing have ever since been the result of this one sad act; the going down of man’s body into the dust whence it was taken—and the passing away of man’s spirit to a heritage of wailing for ever.

If we would fully understand how we ourselves are affected by this sin of our

forefather, we may gather much from the fifth chapter of **Romans**. We there learn that he was dealt with as the representative of the whole race. God entered into covenant with him in behalf of all men. If he broke not the law, then would he win for himself, and each one of his offspring, the crown and the glory, without tasting death or needing resurrection. If he transgressed, then all must be involved in the same ruin—all heirs to the same legacy of the crime and the curse. Had he been alone in the obedience or the misery, the angels who beheld the experiment might not have felt surprize at its result: but knowing him the covenant-head of all future generations, the keeper of the destinies of countless millions, his fall became of all things the most improbable.

Now we introduce such thoughts as these, to shew, not only that all are equally in need of redemption, but that none hath the slightest right to ask it of the Lord. But if such a blessing be possible, whence must it come? Where is the being throughout creation's myriads who could devise a plan by which we might escape the punishment of our guilt, and yet justice be honoured, and the law be satisfied? The angels around the throne might have the will, but they had not the power, to interpose; they are but bright shining things, who have no righteousness whatsoever to spare for man. Whence then could the guilty ones look for deliverance, but from that Maker whom they had offended so wantonly? Who but himself could arrest the arm of justice uplifted to slay them?

And, blessed be his holy name, the first threatening was mingled with the first promise: and when every one of us deserved nothing but the out-pouring of wrath, His love was still abundant towards us the sinful ones. Before the foundation of the world he had prepared for this foreseen apostacy. Though angry with the sin, he still loves the sinners: he willeth not that any should finally perish; he hath made ample provision that all should again call him "Father," and become heirs of his heavenly mansioury. Inasmuch, then, as we are, in every sense, self-destroyed through the fall, and have forfeited every claim to blessedness, and shattered the image of our Maker; and inasmuch as the provision for our return to the sunshine of his favour must proceed entirely from the Almighty; then let us bow humbly and reverently before His goodness, and, ascribing salvation unto God the Father, assent to the position of David, that "it belongeth unto the Lord."

As the origin of redemption is to be ascribed to God's free grace, so also must the way of its execution. This plan was, the providing a surety, who, obeying perfectly in man's nature, and suffering the bitterness of the curse in man's nature, should as his substitute atone for his guilt. But where was the being to be found who should be, as Job expresses it "a daysman between us"—to "lay his hand upon us both?" The full punishment of guilt must fall somewhere; for heaven and earth should pass away before one tittle of the law should fail. This law is for every created being, and for every sinner upon earth, and every holy one above. Forgiveness there could be none, and pardon there could be none, till the sternest of its penalties had been paid. Man of himself could never atone for a single sin. No righteousness for the future can make atonement for the past; just because we owe every moment a fresh debt of obedience. To atone for infinite guilt, our surety must possess

infinite merit, so as to condense as it were the eternal punishment of all men into a moment of time: and what angel or arch-angel could do this? Still further; it was human nature which transgressed—it must be human nature which must both obey and suffer; it was human nature which was tempted and fell—it must be human nature which must be tempted and triumph. To undertake all this for the apostate and the polluted, the love must be supreme, and the willingness complete.

And where, again, throughout the creation could such requirements be found united, that mercy and truth should meet together; righteousness and peace embrace each other? As then no arm could achieve salvation but the Lord's behold, great is the mystery of godliness; God is manifest in the flesh—God and man linked together in wondrous union. The Creator of all things, the Eternal Word, stoops from his throne; is made flesh, and dwells among us; is content to take the form of a servant, and to learn obedience by the things which he suffered. Born of a virgin, as Son of God and Son of man, he passes through all the stages of infancy and manhood, that he may sympathize with all our infirmities. He came unto his own and experienced their rejection: he endured the hourly contradiction of sinners against himself: he kept the law perfect and undefiled; being holy, harmless, separate from sinners, though tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He proved himself "very God," by the miracles which he wrought, and "very man," by the tears which he shed. He proved himself the promised Messiah to both Jew and Gentile; endured in his last struggle the infinite burden of the sin of the world; up-bearing the curse, abolishing death, and triumphing over Satan for ever. He is laid awhile in the grave, but seeth not corruption; the third day he springs from its cold custody by the might of the indwelling Deity, and ascends unto the Father; presents human nature once more spotless before his presence; pleads before the throne, the Lamb as it had been slain, the merits of his death; and there now lives and reigns as King over his Church—as the Advocate of all his pilgrim-followers—and the Intercessor to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.

It concerns us much to ascertain the extent of the efficacy of Christ's death.

We believe that Christ Jesus died for all men, and we take the words in their most unlimited sense. "He tasted death for every man," saith St. Paul. He ransomed all, and thus the whole world became his "purchased possession;" so that every obstacle being removed on God's part which could prevent his being reconciled to all, the invitation may go forth to every one of Adam's lineage, to approach and accept this free salvation. He is "Head over all things for his Church;" and because he rose, all men shall rise also. "The Father judgeth no man," saith St. John, "but hath committed all judgment to the Son." So that because all have been redeemed, all shall be compelled to start up from their graves, and swell the throng that shall congregate round his judgment-throne. Hence we heartily subscribe to the tenet of our Church, that Christ Jesus "redeemed me and all mankind:" so that if the voice of the speaker could be echoed across the mountains and valleys of a land, it would ever fall upon the ear of a lonely outcast, whom the Saviour beseeches not to return, because he agonized for *him*, and died for *him*.

Although salvation thus belongeth unto the Lord, through the counsels of God the Father, and the achievements of God the Son, yet still there must be another sense in which it is true, or man could never inherit the glory. Although God the Father hath provided for the salvation of all, and God the Son hath redeemed all, yet no single sinner could ever be saved, had not the Almighty proceeded one step further in the work of redemption. For God is a being of unsullied purity, and can never be approached by the sinful and the depraved. Though the way hath been opened freely for all to return again to the fold, yet we are by nature both unable and unwilling to walk therein. The prison door is set open by the death of Christ Jesus; but men love darkness rather than light, and cannot, and will not, of themselves, enjoy the full liberty of the children of God. Though the penalty of sin has been paid by another, we are all still criminals; and, without a change of nature, can never be admitted to pardon and forgiveness. The Almighty enters into covenant with the Mediator, on behalf of mankind; if we comply not with the conditions of this covenant, we shall never partake of its blessings. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." To this end, the Most High hath given a revelation of his will; and we must listen reverently to this revelation, and bow our stubborn wills to its authority. We must repent bitterly of sin, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. We must put faith in the Gospel message, and believe the record which God hath given of his Son.

But then comes the important question—Are we able of ourselves to repent and believe? Have we not all erred and strayed like lost sheep, and become alienated from the life of God by wicked works? Can we change our own hearts, or give ourselves true repentance, or lively faith. The Holy Scriptures (and the articles of our Church deduced therefrom) are very clear on these points; and we have often been taught, that of ourselves we can do nothing towards performing the demands of the law, or complying with the invitations of the Gospel. Though the light of life shine about us, we are spiritually blind: though the gateway of life be wide open before us, we cannot take one step towards its threshold.

To supply these our necessities, arising as they do from the first fatal transgression, God again offers us his all-sufficient aid: and as the Spirit, the Comforter, undertakes to enlighten the soul, to arouse it from its death-sleep, to shew it the things that belong to its peace, to warn it of its danger, to sound an alarm for its safety, and to guide it to its rest, he thus introduces it, as by a second birth, into the family of the sons of God; and by acting upon all its mental and moral powers, fits it by a sanctifying process for the blessedness of future reward.

Since, then, salvation is represented to us in Scripture, as springing from the boundless love of God the Father, wrought out for us by the sufferings and sacrifice of God the Son, and applied to us by the converting power of God the Spirit; and as the sacred Three constitute but one undivided Jehovah, we have proof sufficient of the Psalmist's assertion—that "salvation belongeth unto the Lord."

Whenever we approach this point of practical divinity, namely, the operation



of God's Spirit upon man's spirit; we are treading upon the very verge of mystery. Though we may adhere closely to the words of Scripture, yet must we ever pray for the right understanding of these words—going forward humbly and teachably in the fear of the Lord. Yet inasmuch as “except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven,” we are all interested in inquiring how we may ourselves be admitted. To have known for long years that God the Father willeth our recovery, and that God the Son hath died to purchase it, will avail us nothing at the last great day, if we fail in our anxiety to have salvation personally applied to us. To know that we may sit upon the throne, and tune the harp, and grasp the diadem, and then to find ourselves shut out, through carelessness of the way of access, or through attempting to carve out a way for ourselves—this is of all things most keenly distressing.

If then we would avoid so awful a destiny, let us give heed to the scriptural account, first, of our state by nature; secondly, of our state by grace.

Now, in pressing upon men the truth that we are very far gone from original righteousness, we would not deny that man hath still many amiable, and illustrious, and heaven-born qualities, which may add a grace and charm to society. He hath been permitted to keep much of the lovely and the noble which graced the early days of his innocence. The prowess of reason, the breathing of love, and all the social charities of home which God hath spared to gladden man's heart in this vale of weeping—all these may belong to the natural man; but then they can never recommend him to God's favour. All these have been forfeited by the fall; and though hung about with the splendours of early grandeur, they are all used in throwing dishonour on the God who gave them. Scripture represents the soul as actually dead in trespasses and sins; and if we consider it as the tenant of the spiritual and eternal world, just as the body is the tenant of the temporal and material world, we may more easily understand the necessity for the life-giving power of the Spirit. The body is said to be dead, when the eye sees nothing of the beauteous landscape, and the ear hath no fellowship with melody. So the soul is dead when, by reason of its love of sin, it holds no intercourse with the eternal world to which it belongs. As the dead body can never bring itself back to the toils it hath left, or the kindred it hath loved; so the soul wrapped up as it is, and shrouded, in death, can never achieve its own resurrection, and touch and taste of the food of life. And if ever it be stirred, and roused, and waked into active life, it can only be by the breathings of God's Spirit.

And when once the soul passes from its state by nature to its state by grace, through the victory of the Spirit over the power of Satan, and the indulgence of its lusts, then what sincerity of repentance, what tears of contrition, what gains of faith, what dawnings of hope, spring up and flourish! The promises of the Word becomes its own; the Spirit unites it by faith unto the Mediator; and hence the renewed man becomes justified and sanctified, and gradually made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Being a branch of the vine, and a member of the body of Christ, the believer hath new principles, new motives, new pursuits. And if there be one motive which stimulates him to be careful that his faith work by love, and produce abundantly the fruits of righteousness, *it is the promise of future reward*. Strange, indeed, that, having

just impressed you with man's feebleness and deadness, we should venture to speak of reward! Yet thus it is. Upon thee, O man, mysterious compound of spirit and of dust, fitted up afresh as Jehovah's temple, shall be bestowed the treasure that wasteth not, the crown that fadeth not, and the glory that endeth not: and all this according as thou shalt take the sword of the Spirit, and contend earnestly against every enemy of thy soul within, and every enemy of thy God without. And if the doctrines of grace be thus set forth with this looking forward according to the intenseness of effort, who shall accuse them of giving licence to sin? Who shall not see that they establish the law; and confess on bended knee, and with thankful emotion, that there is much of comfort and much of practical holiness in the truth that "salvation belongeth unto the Lord?"

When we inquire into the *extent* of the Holy Spirit's operations, then do we approach subjects the most difficult of all. Some few truths there are which are prominently put forward; and though we cannot prove their harmony, we are bound to shew there is no actual discord. We believe that sufficiency of grace is offered to all, though special grace may be given to some. Though we must distinctly hold with St. Paul, that "Election belongeth unto the Lord," yet must we most strenuously contend that in every sense, "Condemnation belongeth to man." God hath done enough for the world to save all; and if any perish, they perish through their own iniquity. If there be still gross darkness over the lands of heathenism, and but murky twilight over the lands of Christendom, the fault must be wholly with man, who for so many centuries has resisted the strivings of God's Spirit, and torn up the vineyards of his planting. If all shall be condemned through want of faith in the Redeemer, who shall say that sufficiency of means have not been granted us? As far as we are concerned, it is perfectly clear that, if at last we perish, we perish self-condemned. We have been baptized into a true Church during infancy—have been brought up in its doctrines and discipline—have been acted upon by the silent whisperings of conscience, by the secret strivings of the Spirit, by the visitations of afflicting providence, and by ten thousand warnings and entreaties to forsake sin, and follow after holiness. There is, we contend, a warfare ever carrying on between God's Spirit and man's spirit. It is this which makes salvation possible; it is this which makes condemnation just. Let us, then, brethren, be on our guard, lest we quench the Spirit, and provoke him to depart; and inasmuch as we can materially retard our spiritual progress, there is a very important sense in which "Salvation belongeth unto man!"

If you care at all for these things—if you would hereafter be numbered among those who have overcome through the blood of the Lamb—you must be engaged while here in the contest with sin and with the world. The very Apostle who urges most strongly the sovereignty of grace, contends most anxiously for the necessity of holiness in all his converts. We must be "giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure;" and "pressing towards the mark for the prize of our high calling." And is it "giving all diligence," to be careless and indifferent to our soul's health? Is it "pressing forward towards our heavenly prize," to be turned aside by any trifling worldly pursuit? If we arouse not, and give ourselves afresh to the strivings of prayer, and the doings of love, putting our trust solely in the finished sacrifice of our Redeemer, we

must perish amid all that can promote the certainty of our rescue. Our whole duty may be summed up thus: first, to do nothing in procuring salvation for ourselves; and then to do every thing because salvation hath been applied to us. Love unto Him who hath so loved us as to give his life a ransom for ours, must be the main spring of our activity. We cannot recommend ourselves to God's favour, nor atone for sin, nor justify ourselves, nor sanctify ourselves. How mysterious the actings of God's Spirit on man's spirit! It is the man who believes, and the man who repents; and yet the Spirit produces both the faith and the repentance. Here are duties to be done—here are promises of succour: the contest may be arduous, but the victory is certain, and the prize secure. Even the sparkling jewellery and the splendid mansionry, now laid up, hereafter to be confessed before the assembled universe as the glorified followers of the Lamb.

And if these things move you not to seek the one thing needful, then must we remind you that judgment belongeth unto the Lord. He who came once on an errand of mercy will come again as Judge of all men, attended by the pomp of cherub and seraph, to take to himself the kingdom of the saints, to rule over this renovated globe, purified afresh by the deluge of fire, and to slay with the sword of his vengeance the despisers of his loving kindness. He who died for you, loves you in your lost estate, and longs to bring you to his own bright dwelling place; *now*, he offers the freest pardon—*then*, he will exact the sternest penalty. *Now*, it is possible for thee to escape the wrath, and to win the crown—*then*, the overwhelming of his fury shall come down upon the faithless.

A solemn day will that be of the gathering of all the tribes that have ever trod the surface of this earth, coming up from the tomb in resurrection bodies. You, and I, and all here present, must be there. The grand business of that day will be to prove, while eternal life is a gift, eternal death is wages: the one due to the free mercy of Jehovah, the other earned in the service of Satan. Then shall it burst with effulgence on creation, that, while in every sense, "condemnation belongeth unto man," "salvation belongeth unto the Lord."

## MERCY.

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REV. J. PARSONS.

SURREY CHAPEL, FEBRUARY 8, 1835.

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"But I obtained mercy."—1 TIMOTHY, i, 13.

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WE have now, my brethren, to speak and to hear concerning what is written of a blessing, which so far transcendeth every other attainment, that all comparison must be perfectly futile and useless. Some are accustomed to rejoice in the accumulation and acquisition of riches, or of rank, or of fame, or of power, or of knowledge: but let riches be as accumulated, and let rank be as elevated, and let fame be as honourable, and let power be as mighty, and let knowledge be as extended, as human nature can enjoy—when once they are compared with that which we are now to exhibit, they must be regarded as lighter even than vanity. This, my brethren, you observe, is the revelation of a boon, the value of which will be known when all worlds have gone, and perished: "I have obtained mercy."

The person by whom this delightful narrative was propounded, was, as you perceive, the Apostle Paul. In the verses which are connected with the text, he gives a beautiful statement as to his own personal experience—an experience, as many of you are well aware, involving many events most remarkable and striking in their order. Yet, you observe, here he does not advert to his personal history as, in itself, separate from that of others, or as exhibiting characters in which others did not participate. He adverts to it as being—to use his own emphatic phrase—"a pattern," comprehending principles of supreme importance to the highest interests of mankind. It is in this public view—a view sanctioned by the context, and also by the general analogy of Scripture—that we have now to enter upon, for the purpose of illustrating the expression which has been selected as the object of your regard. And we desire to explain our intention by the four following observations, which, as you will observe, while applied to the individual case of the Apostle, are at the same time, of the utmost extent in their application, and in their force. We propose to observe, first, that all men are naturally in need of mercy; secondly, that God has appointed a method by which men may obtain mercy; thirdly, that mercy, when obtained by man, justly becomes the subject of grateful admiration and wonder; and lastly, that all those who have obtained mercy, are placed under obligations instrumentally to effect the communication of mercy to others.

First, we are to remark that ALL MEN ARE NATURALLY IN NEED OF



**MERCY.** "Mercy," as perhaps we need scarcely state, is an expression particularly referring to God; and is that divine attribute by which relief is exercised and extended towards beings, who have become, by their guilt, exposed to punishment and misery. The language of the Apostle plainly and clearly implies, that, at a former period, he was existing in a state in which he required mercy, personally and for himself, that he might be saved from wretchedness and horror. And you observe, it is also clear, that although he refers to his own case, as involving some remarkable peculiarities, yet, in general circumstances, it was analagous and parallel to that of all mankind. That this is the true position of mankind, is what we have now positively to assert, and most earnestly to impress.

The universal need of mercy, it must be observed, is founded on a simple and solemn fact—universal danger as the consequence of universal sin. Men in every nation and through every age, are to be regarded in the light of sinners against God. Sin, you are aware, is the transgression of the divine law, as that law has been laid down for the moral government of the human heart and life. And when you look to the testimony of divine revelation, you will there perceive, that man is never noticed in reference to his lost estate, but as actually guilty in the sight of God, everywhere habitually involved in deep rebellion against the authority of the Universal Governor. We are reminded, for example, that "the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." "The good man is perished, out of the earth; and there is none upright among men." "Jews and Gentiles—they are all under sin." "There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Now, my brethren, exposure to punishment is the necessary consequence of the perpetration of sin; we are therefore reminded that God "will, by no means, clear the guilty;" and "that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." By the law of unerring equity and justice, men are condemned, men are under the curse, men are in peril of the woes and inflictions of the present time, as well as sinking under the final condemnation, by which they will be excluded from all peace, and dignity, and joy, and hope, and made the inheritors of torments, the intensity of which no imagination can conceive, and the duration of which no period can express. Such is the condition of the race to which we belong; and who can take a glance, for a single moment, at the condition of our species, without confessing how much there is need of mercy; and that if mercy pour not her delightful light, for the purpose of irradiating the gathering gloom, the shadows of that gloom must accumulate and continue, till they are consummated in "the blackness of darkness" for ever?

My brethren, in the spirit of closest application you must now permit me to remind you, that you are in need of mercy yourselves. You may perhaps find no difficulty in acknowledging the general doctrine which has been expressed, and yet you may be guilty of denying that your own personal character and personal interests are involved in it. I therefore tell you, my hearers, as before God, and in the plainest terms that language can employ, that you are sinners,

and that therefore you are in danger. You may perhaps be lovely, and amiable, and honourable, in the estimation of your fellow-mortals; and you may be perhaps wholly unsullied and unstained by those vices in which multitudes flagrantly and flagitiously indulge: but if it be sin to admit and cherish in the heart passions which are unholy and impure, are you not guilty? If it be sin not to love the Lord God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength, are you not guilty? If it be sin not to render your high faculties and endowments practically and exclusively to his praise and his glory, are you not guilty? If it be sin to have neglected the great salvation, and to have refused to the divine realities of eternity the paramount and pre-eminent supremacy and government of the thoughts and the life—are you not guilty? It is, my hearers, to no purpose that you play the part of the sophist, that you avoid, that you qualify, that you object, and that you lay the flattering unction to your souls. Your consciences dare not—if they are not so seared and so perverted, that they cannot utter a single whisper of truth within you—dare not, in justice, deny the tremendous allegation, that you are guilty before God. My dear brethren, I state the fact most distinctly to every one now in the presence of God; and in the name of that God before whose tribunal, in a brief space of time, you will be called upon for judgment, I tell you, you are in need of mercy; and that, if you receive it not, you will be absolutely, eternally, and unchangeably undone.

We will now observe, secondly, that GOD HAS PROVIDED A METHOD BY WHICH MEN MAY OBTAIN MERCY. The Apostle, you observe, states that he personally had obtained it; and the spirit of the text implies that that same blessing might easily be applied to others. This, my brethren, is an animating and a delightful truth indeed; a truth which it is the great object of all revelation distinctly to state and to impress; and a truth which is emphatically “glad tidings of great joy, to you and to all people.” There are two facts with regard to the method of mercy, to which I have now to request your serious regard; by which I trust the whole matter will be faithfully and sufficiently explained.

The first fact is, *that mercy is provided through the atonement, and the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.* You observe that the Apostle, in immediate connexion with, and as an illustration of, the spirit of the text, beautifully exhibits in the subsequent verses the worth of the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour. “This,” says he, “is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners:” and then he states, in the following verse, how it is that the work of Christ becomes applicable to individual men; it is by “believing in him to life everlasting.” The Son of God, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, was given in “the fulness of time,” that upon the cross of Calvary he might offer an atoning sacrifice for sin, the merit of which, when applied to his people through the appointed instrumentality of faith, should sanctify, should justify, and should save, in perfect consistency with the honour of that justice insulted by sin, and to the anathema of which, without satisfaction, man must always be exposed.

You are aware, my brethren, how many times in the writings of the Apostle

we have a distinct development of the doctrine of regeneration, to which your attention is now called. We are told in one place, that "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." We are reminded again, that, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some will even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And again, that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man who doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith, speaketh this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith which we preach: that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The Apostle, for himself, you are aware, rushed (as it were) to the sacrifice of Christ, under the sense of his own need, as that upon which he would repose with absolute confidence of soul. The Apostle, on a memorable occasion, when he had been referring to the numerous privileges in which in former times he had boasted, and in which he had been accustomed to delight, exclaims, in elevated strains, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Behold, my brethren, the mode of mercy in the sacrifice of the Saviour. It was on him, when on the cross of Calvary, that there fell the fire that justice had lighted up to desolate when Adam fell: it had run along the surface of the earth, finding fresh fuel in every folly, and in every crime, of man; and which, had it not been for the interposing power of his divine sacrifice, would have consumed the habitations of our race to ashes, and would have wrapped the universe in flames: and therefore, my brethren, that redemption and mercy are to be obtained through the sacrifice of Christ alone. Men may embrace other creeds if they will; they may resort to other refuges if they will; and they may institute other pleas if they will; but to be saved from the wrath that is to come, excepting by Him who died on the ignominious tree, is utterly impossible. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "Neither is there any



other name under heaven given among men, whereby they can be saved, but the name of Jesus." "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life." "He that believeth not shall be damned."

Secondly, my brethren, connected with the mode of mercy, to which we now call your attention, is, that the mercy provided by atonement and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, *is sufficient for the very vilest of our race*. This, you remark, the Apostle argues from in consequence of circumstances in his own experience and history. "Christ Jesus," says he, "came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief." And as, notwithstanding he was "the chief of sinners," he had yet been permitted to obtain mercy, the general conclusion intended to be established by him is, that there is mercy for the chief of sinners. It is, you observe, in this reference also, that in the fourth verse he says, "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." It was also in this reference that in the sixteenth verse he says, "Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy"—and I request your special attention to the perpetuity of this passage—"I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ Jesus might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." His pardon being received, although he had been, according to his own acknowledgment, so guilty and so vile, is to be regarded as a pattern, as a proof, and as a presage that there is no guilt which man can commit, in any age, or under any state of the world, that is to be regarded beyond the power of the atoning merit of Him who was crucified; and that whosoever—no matter by what crimes and by what blasphemies he may have been branded—"that whosoever believeth on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ should be saved."

The proof of this gracious and delightful truth is multiplied in many a page of the sacred Scriptures. Hear the language of ancient prophecy: "Who is this," says the prophet, "that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Hear the record of the Saviour himself in the days of his flesh: "The Son of man came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Hear the record of his Apostle: He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin." "He is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him." Remember, my brethren, all that is stated in the Sacred Word with regard to his divinity—remember all that is stated with regard to his mediation, as deriving its efficacy from that divinity. Every part of this Sacred Volume is one testimony of the omnipotence of mercy; one demonstration, that it is impossible for any who are found in the hands of Jesus, to be lost. Yea, my hearers, I tell you, doubt what you will, doubt not that Jesus is omnipotent to redeem. Doubt that the sun-beam must chase the shadows of the night, and pervade and gild the firmament with the radiant splendour of the day: doubt that the balmy and sweet spring will hush and succeed the wintry tempest, and summer put forth foliage to clothe creation with the garments of beauty and loveliness: doubt, if you will, any established ordinance of heaven, or the regular revolutions of the earth: but doubt not, I repeat, that Christ is almighty to redeem. Standing



upon the impregnable rock of his promises, I now proclaim, in all the gladness of a buoyant and grateful heart, in the personal retrospection of his grace, that, as true as that there is a God, and as true as that that God cannot lie, so true is it, that, if you will but believe upon the atoning sacrifice of the cross, you shall obtain mercy, and find the salvation of your souls.

It is to be observed, thirdly, as we proposed, that **MERCY, WHEN OBTAINED BY MAN, MUST JUSTLY BE THE SUBJECT OF GRATEFUL ADMIRATION.** It is clear that the feelings of the Apostle in regard to the kindness of the Saviour towards him, were those of grateful astonishment. "O wonder! I obtained mercy; even *I*, the chief of sinners, even *I* obtained mercy! How marvellous the work—how worthy of eternal admiration and praise, that free and sovereign grace, by which I became what I am!" There have been, in every period of the world, many who have obtained mercy, who must have regarded their privilege with emotion similar to that of the great Apostle; and I trust there are many in this assembly who have obtained mercy (and I trust that multitudes will receive this mercy) who cannot do otherwise than express this emotion in its most ardent and fervent form. Yet, for the purpose of further impression, both on ourselves and their minds, we must notice several different reasons, in connexion with the great change before us, by which we have cause for grateful admiration and joy.

And, first, this grateful admiration is properly excited in contemplating *the nature of the change itself*. When we obtain mercy, we undergo a high and wondrous transformation, which, when we contemplate it, must excite grateful amazement in every sensitive and enlightened mind. What, my brethren, is that change? A change from alienation to friendship; a change from condemnation to justification; a change from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; a change from death to life; a change from a state of wrath and terror to a state of favour and of love.

There are two or three cases in which the Apostle, in addressing different churches, reminds them of the nature of their change, in the spirit of contrast: and, for myself, I have never been able to read those sublime and beautiful statements, without tears of melting tenderness: let me commend them to your regard in the same spirit. Take the record of the Apostle which he presents to the Corinthian church, in 1 Corinthians, vi. 9—11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Take, again, another statement which we find in Ephesians, ii., "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom, also, we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved

us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus." And again: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." And once more, take the record of the Apostle Peter, in 1 Peter, ii. 9, 10: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Which, in time past, were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

My Christian brethren and sisters, apply these statements to yourselves; remember what you were, and what you are: and when you contemplate the change which has been wrought upon you, are you not, even now, in contemplating its nature, lost and overwhelmed in astonishment and joy; made, as you are, the subjects of a high transformation, which renders you new creatures in a lost world? It is with wonder, then, in this respect, that we must exclaim, "I obtained mercy."

And again, my brethren, it will be observed, that this grateful admiration is also rightly excited by contemplating *the circumstances under which the change was accomplished*. The circumstances under which the Apostle of the Gentiles was caused to receive mercy, are those of a very singular and extraordinary kind. You are aware, at the time of his conversion, he was engaged in a relentless malignant crusade against the interests of the infant Church of Christ. "Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter"—for such is the description introducing the event, in Acts, ix.—"Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near to Damascus;"—he was close to the spot where he was about to rage and let loose the hell-hounds of his fury; and now mark—the eagle was struck at the very moment he was about to pounce; the lion was seized, and tamed, and hushed, in the very delirium and madness of his thirst for blood:—"and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him, stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no one. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was

three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink." And during the time of physical blindness, the eyes of his understanding were opened, the prey was taken from the mighty, and the humble captive was delivered, and Saul the persecutor, became throughout immortal ages, the triumphant monument and pattern of the sovereign grace of God.

My hearers, the introduction of man to the enjoyment of spiritual blessings, does not often involve a train of events, singular and extraordinary, like those which occurred in the conversion of the Apostle Paul. And yet I might venture to affirm—and I would appeal to the experience of all converted persons now in the presence of God—that there never does occur a single conversion, without the man in whom that conversion was accomplished, having reason for the excitation of grateful wonder and admiration. Yes, my brethren, whether it be the conversion of those who have been stained by flagitious and flagrant enormities, or those who have been habitual and regular in the discharge of moral and social duties—whether it be the conversion of the opulent or the poor, of the aged or the young—whether it be conversion accomplished as amidst the earthquake, the whirlwind, and the fire, or amidst the whispers of the still small voice; whether as amid the rushing and outpouring of the flood, or as amidst the gentle and spontaneous droppings of the dew; whether in such a mode of thunder, that the transition becomes marked and palpable at once, or by such a gentle and insinuating process, that the transition is scarcely discoverable, excepting by its results; in all cases the facts and the doctrines are the same. I speak especially to Christians this morning; and I earnestly request that all Christians will look back upon the season, when they were brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. Remember the way by which the Lord your God hath led you; think of the spot—for, perchance, many can refer to it—when the arrow of conviction reached you: and think of the spot—for many of you can refer to it—where the healing balm was poured from the hands of the divine compassion upon that wound, so that you were healed and were redolent with joy. And when you think of the way in which your chains were broken, and your spirits were made to go free, and mercy shed around you all her ambrosial fragrance, and all her vivid and celestial lights—has not your astonishment risen higher, and become more refined, when you contemplated in this view, "I obtained mercy?"

But, thirdly, this emotion of grateful admiration must also be excited when we contemplate *the results which this change has secured*. Some notice has been made of the results of obtaining mercy already: but we must now refer to them more distinctly and more fully. And, my hearers, in this record, "I obtained mercy," there are involved all the blessings which can elevate and gladden the undying spirit of man. Shall we tell you briefly in what they consist? While every transgression is blotted from the book of the divine remembrance, and is to be written there and recognized no more, there is an introduction into the divine family; the spirit of bondage is taken away, the spirit of freedom and of adoption are given; and the sinner who once quailed and trembled when he thought of the madness of the universe, now lifts up his hands and his eyes without doubting, crying, "My Father, my Father." There is an interest in the exceeding great and precious promises—these promises which are yea and amen in Christ, and are secured by oaths and by blood. There is the security

of the conflict over sin, and all its penal consequences, when the victory is given to the Redeemer upon whom we have reposed. And then there is the destined inheritance of the world of light and splendour, where the glory of the Redeemer is revealed in unveiled majesty; where his people are caused to assemble, and assimilated to his image, the partakers of his joy—made partakers of honours and happiness, which eye hath not seen, and which ear hath not heard, and which the mind of man hath not been able to conceive—and to continue in the possession of these honours and these enjoyments,

“ While life, and thought, and being last,  
And immortality endures.”

Mercy gives earth, and mercy at last will impart heaven. Think, my brethren, What did I *deserve*? The curse, the fire, the worm; the curse never to be rolled away—the fire never to be quenched—the worm never to die. And what have I *received*? Mercy; spiritual blessings; *all* spiritual blessings; so that all things are mine, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come—they all are mine; for I am Christ's, and Christ is God's. Do we not already pant to render the grateful admiration of the skies, finding tongues too feeble, and earth too narrow? Aye, my hearers, and in yonder world of glory, wonder and admiration will live throughout its perennial ages; and there is not a harp that is struck, and there is not a note that is sounded, and there is not a joy that is felt, and there is not a melody that is breathed, but what arises from perpetual wonder on the part of those who are redeemed: “I obtained mercy.” And this thought, “I obtained mercy! I obtained mercy!” will kindle the Hallelujahs for ever of “salvation unto God and to the Lamb.”

We have now to observe, fourthly, that THOSE WHO HAVE OBTAINED MERCY ARE UNDER OBLIGATION INSTRUMENTALLY, TO ATTEMPT THE COMMUNICATION OF MERCY TO OTHERS. You will remark, that the Apostle, whose case forms the foundation of all our deductions, entered upon a plan and sphere of exertion in the cause of the Gospel, and for the welfare of his fellow-men, as soon as his conversion had been achieved. What his subsequent life was, you well know. He went forth at once, preaching amongst the Gentiles “the unsearchable riches of Christ;” “counting not his life dear to him, that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God:” and in spite of peril, and in spite of toil, and in spite of infirmity, and in spite of Satan, he continued a marvel and a pattern of zeal and of labour, to the close of a long-continued life; and then quietly laid down the weapons with which he had fought the battle: looking to his own conflict he said, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course. I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.”

My Christian brethren, we have received no commission from the visible splendour of the shekinah, or by the audible voice of the Redeemer. There was no light from heaven which shone over our path; there were no melodious sentences which we recognized as coming from the Redeemer of mankind; and yet it is our ordained, and our distinctly ascertained duty, having ourselves obtained mercy, to go forth as the instruments in the hands of that Jesus by whom we have been redeemed for the purpose of endeavouring to bring on



fellow-men to the enjoyment of the same privileges and principles, that they too may not perish, and that they too may have everlasting life. Permit me to ask you, my professing Christian friends, how, in past time, this duty has been performed by you as the recipients of mercy? To how many have you proclaimed the sinfulness of sin? To how many have you proclaimed the desert of sin, and the punishment of futurity? To how many have you lifted up "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world?" To how many have you displayed the mercy of free and everlasting grace, and invited, and con-jured, and exhorted, that you might present them perfect in Christ Jesus? What is the state of your families, your parents, your children, your sisters, and your brethren, your dependants, and your friends? What exertions have you employed in connexion with the great public institutions of the age, which are intended for the education of the young, and the instruction of the poor, for the circulation of the Scriptures, or for the diffusion of the preaching of the cross to the utmost boundaries of the earth? Recipients of mercy! the obligation of this morning's service is made to press especially upon you; and I ask you solemnly, and charge you to remember, and faithfully to reply, as in the presence of the living God.

Do you ask, my brethren, what are the motives which ought to urge you forward, thus to be instrumental in communicating mercy to others? Why do you think that in the present Christian assembly I would dare or condescend to argue with professed Christians, as to the motives for that benevolent and philanthropical exertion? We will just tell you, and proceed. The first motive is, gratitude to that Redeemer who has emancipated and who has bought you. The second is, a real concern for the glory and honour of your heavenly Father. The third is, a deep and intense compassion for the well-being of the souls of men. They are perishing; they are perishing at your very threshold, and around your very dwelling: they are perishing throughout your country; and they are perishing throughout the mighty expanse of the world; and he who feels not, and who mourns not, and who strains not every nerve to emancipate and redeem them, by the power of the everlasting Gospel, has not a feeling but what humanity must blush to own, and even depravity refuse to record, except in the very blackest catalogue of its crimes.

My Christian brethren who have obtained mercy, for mercy's sake, I beseech you to kindle yourselves, by reflecting on the motives to which we have adverted; and for mercy's sake I pray you go forth to the full extent of property, opportunity, talent, and time,

"Anxious to tell to all around,  
What a dear Saviour you have found."

Never, my brethren, can you who have the lamp of life refuse to let it shine on those who are now groping their way in a worse than Egyptian darkness, to the borders of the last abyss. Never can you who sit around the dainties of the marriage feast refuse to go into the streets and lanes of the city, and into the highways and hedges, compelling men to come in, that they may sing with you, "He hath brought us to his banquetting house, and his banner over us is love." Never can you who sit beneath the shadow of the tree of immortality be guilty of placing around it a cherubim and flaming sword, lest other men should lift

out the hand, and pluck, and taste, and eat, and live for ever. No, my brethren, rather let us take some scions from that parent stock, and plant it in all nations. It will grow in every soil: the frosts of the North will not stunt it; the scorplings of the South will not blast it: the whirlwind shall not wither it; the tempest shall not uproot it. It will grow in the garden, and it will flourish upon the rock: in every region it will bring forth its foliage and its fruit, at once the medicine and the food of millions; until it shall have transformed the universe into one paradise of beauty, and made the wilderness like the Eden, and the desert like the garden, of the Lord. Carry forth the tidings; and remember, that excepting you act according to the principles of gratitude, of zeal, and of compassion, you cannot tell but that, in some mysterious judgment, the blood of immortal souls shall be required at your hand.

And now, my Christian friends, look to yourselves. Let me exhort you how careful you should be that the evidence of your having obtained mercy should be preserved clear, distinct, and unequivocal. We have, too, been magnified in the grace of God, that others may glorify God in us, not merely by our zeal, but by our careful and constant obedience to the commands of that Jesus on whom our spirits repose for immortality. As we are bought by mercy, we must give our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service. We must be crucified to the world; and let "our lives which we live in the flesh be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us." I beseech you, my brethren, by the bowels and by the tenderness of Christ, that you be diligent in the cultivation of that practical holiness which is required as the best and most satisfactory testimony, that we are numbered among the people of the Lord. He "died for us that he might redeem us *from all iniquity*, and purify unto himself a peculiar people *zealous of good works*."

Then, again, let those of you who are in a state of broken-hearted penitence and conviction, see the encouragement against despondency and despair. Despair! What, while there exists a Redeemer like the one who has now been exhibited to your view? Despair! while we can remind you of Saul the blasphemer, the persecutor, and the injurious one, who nevertheless "obtained mercy?" Despair! while we can tell you of the dying malefactor who hung by the side of the Saviour, and who in that last moment of agony turned his lingering and fading eye, with a last prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom;" and the Saviour, as it were, clasping him to his bosom as his best trophy, exclaimed, "Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise?" Despair! aye, penitent; despair when no olive branch of peace is held out from the throne of the infinite glory. Despair! when the memory of the atonement is blotted out and annihilated for ever. Despair! when God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit is dispossessed of the throne of universal power and grace. Despair! when the inhabitants of heaven are swept away from its fields of living bliss, and are transformed into the outcast fiends of perdition, the down-trodden rebels in a world of torment and eternal fire. But never, never, never, till then let the penitent despond and despair. Jesus yet lives, yet willing, yet almighty: and, penitents, bear your spirits upon the altar of his sacrifice, and as sure as that

any soul has been redeemed, peace and joy shall come to you, and you shall start up again as new beings, having around your brow the already-commencing radiance of heaven chaunting the melodies of anticipated immortality—"I have obtained mercy! I have obtained mercy!"

And finally, let those among you who have *not* yet "obtained mercy" be careful to ask for it *now*. Ah! there are perhaps many here, young and old, who have not obtained mercy, and who think but little of it. My brethren, ponder the mighty issues which are suspended upon your recipiency of this high and heavenly boon. If you obtain mercy you will be happy; if you do not obtain it you will be miserable. I will tell you very plainly, so that children and ignorant persons can perfectly understand—and I speak upon the authority of the Bible: if you obtain mercy you will go to heaven; if you do not obtain mercy you will go to hell. And yet you have *not* obtained it, nor *sought* for it. What a state! You are amiable, moral, having a fair and honourable reputation among your fellow men; but you have not obtained mercy. The sunshine of prosperity is upon you; and the light of Providence has beamed kindly and benignantly upon your path; but you have not obtained mercy. You have families growing up around you, apparently as the comfort and the prop of your declining age; you have no prodigal children who are bringing down your hairs with sorrow to the grave; they all tend and nourish you as you proceed towards the land of immortality; but you have not received mercy. You are young and buoyant; the glow of health and the bloom of beauty are on your cheek; you follow in a track of admiration; and where you go you are loved and honoured—but you have not obtained mercy. Sinners, I ask you a question, pausing in a field, the sphere of which is extending almost to an interminable extent around you: and with this I must close: What will you think, if, when the probation of time is ended, and when you stand before the burning throne of righteous and eternal justice, you shall just gaze for a moment upon the ineffable splendours of the Judge, and confess—"I have *not* obtained mercy!" And then God will say, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and ye did not regard; I now will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." What will be the mockery, and the laughter, and the derision of God! His Spirit is brooding amongst us; Jesus is bending in all the intensity of the unsatisfied travail of his soul; and he asks you, "See if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." Ask, and ye shall receive: the Father is ready; the Son is ready; the Spirit is ready: the ministering angels are watching to see if there shall be joy over one sinner brought to repentance. Shall it be, or shall it not? The whole universe waits and invites: shall the whole universe wait and invite in vain? My brethren, your consciences and your destinies shall render the reply: it is but the prayer of the preacher and the prayer of hundreds of Christians on your behalf, that you *al.* may obtain mercy. Amen.

## THE SUFFERINGS AND GLORIFICATION OF BELIEVERS.

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“ If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”—ROMANS viii. 17.

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As the kingdom of grace is directly opposed to that of nature, and as all that appertains to it passes through different channels, and applies itself to different objects, so are the ways, and precepts, and dealings of God, essentially dissimilar to those of men. And there is an obvious reason why these things are necessarily so. We are the slaves of sense and feeling; and our expectations and desires spring out of these. We act under false impressions, because our notions are all framed in the dark. We have eyes, but they see not: we have understandings, but they perceive not. We fancy an object, and our immediate endeavour is to secure it, without any regard to the intrinsic worth of it, or the bankrupt circumstances of the *soul*; which needs something higher and holier to support it, than the passing shadows that catch the eye.

But God in his adorable mercy interposes to save us from ourselves. If we were left by *Him* to be controlled by our own passions, and to be led by our own wisdom, we should do our utmost to pervert the right ways of the Lord, and to throw all his gracious arrangements into disorder: we should change times and seasons; and instead of scattering the seed as a necessary step to harvest, make the bold attempt at believing that the reaping time was to arrive first; and instead of placing in their proper order, the Christian's warfare in the fore-ground, and the crown and the resting-place behind it, we *should* unquestionably do what numbers *are* doing *now*, take our rest in this day of mortality, and forget the warfare altogether. *Man's* way is to consult his present ease: *God's* way is to provide for his everlasting happiness. The sinner looks to the things that *please* him; the Lord of sinners to the better things that will eternally *profit* him. The creature would fain leap into heaven with his unholy affections still about him; but God constrains him to continue a pilgrim until he lays them in the dust; because “without holiness, no man can see the Lord.” Every one who is not made wise by grace fearlessly believes, whatever he is, that he shall pass from death into the hands of a God of mercy: but Jehovah's word utterly crushes such an idea, and declares, as in the text, this we shall do, “If so be that we suffer with Christ, that we may be also glorified together.” May we find, brethren, both the light and the truth of God in this Scripture. Without these accompaniments of the spiritual man, my preaching will be but beating the air, and your hearing a thing to flatter the soul, but not to profit it.



First I shall show, that we may largely partake of sufferings, which are wholly irrespective of Christ. Secondly, I shall attempt to describe the peculiar sufferings of a true believer: and lastly, what is meant by being “glorified together with the Lord.”

Sin and corruption have made the very nature that we wear, a suffering nature: it would not be fleshly and mortal if it had an exemption from the common evils that beset this wilderness of life. We suffer, not because God willed it, but because iniquity, when it first travailed with mischief, gave it existence. We suffer not because it was a necessary part of the creation of man, but for a reason that we are less willing to admit, namely, that when the creature fell from his integrity, sorrow, and wretchedness, and afflictive thorns, sprang out of its ruin. The Lord’s hand had no more to do with the planting of these, than you with the establishment of the heavens. He is a God of love, and it is not in love to act upon the principles of a destroyer. Take this word, brethren, and believe and remember it, that whatever *good* distinguishes the sinner from others, is to be ran up to the full free fountain of God; and whatever of *evil*, to be charged home upon ourselves.

Now, in speaking of human suffering, irrespective of a contrite or a broken heart, you may find it in every estate of man. First, in his *tears*. Nature has wept as bitter tears, as ever were shed upon the earth. There are indeed feelings so deeply hardened that they melt at nothing: but in ordinary cases, they will not refuse to sympathize; nay, they will rush out towards some object of their idolatrous regard, and by their impetuous flowing, throw the whole man into agitation. I cannot imagine that insulated being who has not his cherished objects to weep over, as well as to rejoice in; who has not emptied his full agonized soul over a mere body of clay: who has not fancied too, at the moment, that his earthly all was dissolved, in the dissolution of a jewel which he had grasped so fast as almost to make it a part of himself. Yes, brethren, thousands *so* believe, *so* weep, *so* feel; but their object is that which is of the earth, earthy. They have not one sigh of remembrance for the soul’s condition, and they consider not, whether it is on the bosom of Christ, or in a lake of fire—in a peaceful, or a tormenting eternity. It is a selfish trouble, as David’s was for the loss of Absalom; but the lamentation is not carried out to the extent of the soul. This is suffering, but of what kind? There is that in it which distresses, but not which *sanctifies*; it makes a wound, but not one for Jesus to heal.

But perhaps some of you have a better hope in respect to your sorrows, and will challenge me upon a point which you believe cannot be gainsayed. You will say, that so far from having only afflicted yourselves, for the loss or removal of the things of this world, you have bitterly taken to heart the sufferings of Christ himself: that you have again and again followed him in imagination through all the dark places of his toilsome and perilous journey; and have been ready to say with Peter, when he beheld him with the yet untasted cup in Gethsemane, and hastening to the yet unfelt cross of Calvary, “These be far from thee, Lord.” Alas! brethren, such tokens do but ill express the true state of the heart; they are scarcely more than the titlings of the Pharisee—the mint, and the cummin, and the aniseed, if they are not accompanied

with the weightier matters of the law. They are as the grass that withereth, and the flower that fadeth, if there is not something more substantial than this glow of feeling. Any sensitive constitution may, by the force of circumstances, be excited to tears, and a tale of fiction would as easily, and as powerfully affect it, as the bleeding body of Christ. Those were, without doubt, strong and piercing cries which the women of the city poured out when they saw Jesus hurried away to his crucifixion: but he turned round to them with a word of reproof, which may still find hearts for application—"Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." As if he had said, "Away with this false sensitiveness, which can neither advantage *me* in my passion, as one whom it behoves to suffer; nor profit *you*, who should be mourners after a godly sort. To weep for me, who am on my way to victory to achieve the last conquest of grace, is the act of a weak and darkened mind: but turn ye rather to where your tears may more profitably flow—to your own souls, which need to be brought lower by a spiritual crucifixion, and to your children, which are not yet advanced above the rudiments of the world."

But further yet; we may suffer in those pangs of conviction, which seem almost to make a rent in the spirit, so piercingly do they cut through it; and still we may be far from suffering with Christ. That manslayer, Cain, under the agony of such a wound, exclaimed that his punishment was greater than he could bear: and Judas, driven nearly to madness by the tyrant power of his unsanctified convictions, had no sooner received the price of blood with one hand, than he cast it away with the other: he was in actual possession of his wages, but his taskmaster, Satan, gave him not a breathing moment to enjoy them. And to draw examples nearer—from our own doors, and which may be responded to by our own experience—is it not as clear a case, as that Christ has the government upon his shoulders, that some of you have been painfully and alarmingly convinced that God is prepared to execute the fierceness of his wrath; that your lamps are without oil; that the loins of your mind are loose and ungirded; that you know not the holiness which becometh the Gospel of Christ; and that you have been, from time to time, grievously agitated by this unsatisfying knowledge, and, notwithstanding, that both in mind, and soul, and spirit, you are as little transformed, as if these terrors had not come nigh you? *Then* is it not *virtually* with you as it was with Cain, though you have not the marks of blood upon your consciences? And is it not with you as it was with Judas, though you have not betrayed the Son of man with a kiss? You have been sufferers in the fiery furnace of *conviction*, but you have not suffered with Christ. Deep waters have risen up, and washed away every plank and reed from your outstretched hands; but you have seen no Christ walking upon those troubled waters, and offering his everlasting arm for your encouragement. It is not the sharpest fits of conviction that prove any conformity to the will of God, or to the image of Christ. It is not what you feel of terror, in alarm at some coming desolation; but it is what you are actually experiencing of *present* peace, of *abiding* joy, of love richly shed abroad within you. It is the sense of these bright spiritual consolations, that is the best treasure of the believer: and they are in no wise inconsistent with, but rather confirmatory of, a previous suffering with Christ. There is more implied in holy, child-like suffering, than either bodily or mental anguish. Pain, disease, and death, come alike to all;

who can pronounce of *these*, "They are plagues that shall not come nigh me?" But of those special sufferings which are absolutely identified with God's grace and an indwelling Saviour, the whole class of unbelievers, with one accord and voice, denounce them as enemies of their peace; with a vain reliance on the security of their strong holds, they strive, and plunge, and kick against the pricks, and think to escape their dominion.

But I am, in the second place, to attempt a description of THE PECULIAR SUFFERINGS OF THE BELIEVER. The Apostle in this chapter is expatiating largely on the privileges of a sinner's adoption. He shows to what we are debtors, and of what we are receivers. He speaks in contrast of the carnally and spiritually minded; and whilst he passes judgment upon the former, as enmity against God, he gives the latter the unspeakably precious titles of "children," "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." But lest the ungodly liver, and the forgetful hearer should, in their presumption, take to themselves these glorious and privileged names, he adds a word of limitation that cannot be *mistaken*: "If so be that we suffer with Christ, that we may be also glorified together. Now, here we have to do with a very simple expression, and a very distinct command: we are to *suffer with Christ*. It is clear that this must apply, in its principle, not to those particular sorrows that he had to encounter, not to his buffetings, his revilings, or his imprisonments (for many of the redeemed Church are exempt from these); but to those general acts which he did for our imitation and example; acts that involve the great essentials of the Christian life, and from which no disciple of his can have an exemption: hear them, my brethren, for they are worthy of all acceptance. First, he emptied himself of his glory when he came to do the will of God; and, secondly, in every feature of his mortal character, he appeared clothed with humility. These are the very garments that must adorn the Christian; and in them we become like the king's daughter, "all glorious within." There is a sad fountain of pollution in all our hearts, from which every sinner in the whole earth, who is to be an inheritor of the Lord's kingdom, must be emptied. The extent of this pollution is unknown even to the most discerning of the Lord's people. Limited as the heart is, the corruption within it is unlimited; narrow as the space is where the thoughts, and desires, and imaginations are conceived, they comprehend evil enough to ruin a world. We must be emptied of our glory.

This was the way in which the Son of God opened the channels of his grace, and in no other way can we become partakers of the divine nature. He laid by that which was the very excellency and purity of heaven; we have to reject nothing but dross; nothing but what would for ever shut us out from the presence of the Lamb. It is possible that some of you, my hearers, may not recognize any of your besetting sins under the name of glory: you know not where it lies, or to what it refers. I can understand this. You know not the interpretation, nor the seat of human glory, because you know not yourselves. If the heart were not above all things deceitful, you would not let blind ignorance so lord it over you; you would not be so untaught, and yet so unwilling to be made wise. Every natural man glories in his nature. He does not tell you so; but the acts of every day are positive declarations of his state of feeling. Is there no glorying in his reason, his understanding, his educa-

tional endowments? But whatever it is, as long as he stands off from the cross, as long as he is satisfied to be anywhere and everywhere, rather than at the feet of Christ, he is glorying in his shame; he is minding earthly things. Nature is the vast receptacle of all impurity, as grace is of all loveliness and beauty. It feeds the lust of the eye and the pride of life, and keeps the whole soul chained down under the beggarly elements of the world. It is only when the love of a sinner is drawn off from these waters of corruption, and attracted to the clear imperishable spring of life and immortality, that he ceases to make any creature of earth his glory.

First, then, every one who suffers with Christ, must be emptied of *himself*. Self is our king, our counsellor, our great carnal refuge in the storms, and winds, and heavings of the bosom of life. But this is the very chiefest of those idols that must be cast to the moles and to the bats. Whilst an unsubdued, an unholy, an unregenerate self keeps its ground in the soul, the earth under our feet is loose and trembling; the heavens above are covered with blackness; a thousand weapons are pointed at our unguarded and defenceless hearts; and thus we stand in jeopardy every hour. There is no evil that our humanity can experience, which is not either immediately or remotely connected with an indulgence of self; and there is no truth that we are less disposed to embrace. Well, if Christ is to be honoured, this must be dishonoured; if Christ is to reign, this must be dethroned; if Christ is to be heartily loved, this must be thoroughly abased. There can be no concord between slavery and freedom—between oppressive tyranny, and the dominion of love. There is, it is true, a serious conflict in the accomplishment of these things; but is it any new or strange matter for a spiritual soldier to be exercised in a spiritual warfare? I know not what the believer has to do in the world, but to fight under the conquering banner of Christ, and to glory in the Captain of his salvation. It is a conflict of suffering; but what then? Had not Christ the endurance of it? He spared not either toil, or strength, or blood; and He threw himself alone into the camp of principalities and powers, and fought his way through them all to the baptism wherewith he desired to be baptized. He suffered as the elect Head; and we, as members, must suffer with Christ.

Again, we must be emptied of *our natural delight of those low joys that steal away the affections from God*. The joy of the world—judge, dear brethren, what it is worth, by the thing with which it is compared. There is scarcely any thing so brief, so poor, so swiftly passing a sound, as the crackling of thorns under a pot. This is the comparison. To rest upon such a bubble, and call it joy, is just to fall into the delirium of men who all their lives live upon the barrenness of the ceremonial law, and call it Gospel Christianity; who hear the preaching of the cross, and call it foolishness. But shall I, therefore, bid you become strangers to *all* joy? Shall I fix upon Christ's people the badges of mourning, and say, "Be ye henceforth men of a sad countenance?" No; I would rather speak the Apostle's language; "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Mourn, brethren, for your sins demand it; but be not mourners without hope. Remember, you may lift up your heads in the darkest moments, for the Bridegroom is with you. Still there will be a roughness and a steepness in your paths; but you will find them easier at every step, by keeping a steady eye upon Christ, who was not to be beaten out of his course by suffering, but "for



the joy that was set before him," the joy, not of wearing a brighter crown, but of snatching brands out of the burning, "endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God."

But we must be farther emptied of our own *righteousness*. Observe, the spirit of holiness is to be worked *in* us; but the righteousness which is of faith is to be worked *for* us. *Holiness*, as the fruit of a sanctifying Christ, is that which of all other things you should desire; but the justifying righteousness which worked salvation for the sinner, is the exclusive property of the Son of God. To touch the ark of this glory is death. If God, brethren, has given you wisdom, or spiritual proficiency, or spiritual illumination, above your fellows, take good heed that you do not anchor your trust upon either of these, or think they can plead before God for you as saviours: you may be thankful for the gift, but to assume that the gift, wonderful as it is, has the merit of the Giver, in ever so small a degree, is to trespass upon the sovereignty of God, and secretly to cherish the lie that salvation is of works. It is no easy thing to be drawn off from our own conceits, to tread the depths of his mercy, to be driven off from our own fulness, to live upon the fulness of Christ: and, indeed, so averse are we to the task of doing what is contrary to nature, that it takes many hard stripes to bring us to it. But this is the believer's trial: thus it becometh him to "suffer with Christ."

I have now, in the last place, to consider WHAT IS MEANT BY THE SAVIOUR AND THE SINNER BEING GLORIFIED TOGETHER. Brethren, the meaning of this great mystery may be told you in the letter of Scripture; but the spiritual privilege who shall tell you! The glorification of a sinner is for eternity, and not for time; it is the all-important, all-blessed, and all-sufficient result of the bringing in an everlasting righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord; and the glory to be received and possessed is so entirely and exclusively his own, that none others but those whom he has adopted in covenant love as his children, can be sharers in it. The brightness and the radiance of the redeemed will not be owing to the bright lights of heaven; or to the refulgence that may be thrown around them from the crystal wells of the eternal city: but they shine from their high union with the Son of God. They are not lesser suns in a lower firmament, whilst He is a *distinct* Sun, and immensely above them; but in this way I may, perhaps, by a feeble similitude, express my thought: He is the *only* Sun transcendentally glorious; they are the poured-out beams of it; and so, from their mystical oneness with him, transcendentally happy. Yes, brethren, if our lives shall be hid in him, we shall live as he lives, and be holy as he is holy; and the crown on *our* heads will be as unfading as it is on *His*.

The whole force of this concluding Scripture rests on that one word "together." Once apprehend what it is to suffer *with* Christ, and thou wilt readily perceive, that the principle which attaches every suffering believer to his Lord, will be the same unbroken bond in their *glorification*. It is on both sides a union of love. From God-man it is love freely given; from the ransomed sinner the same love freely restored. He loved the chosen flock of his pasture, because it was his sovereign pleasure to do it: we love him because he first loved us; and it is not only declarations of abounding grace that we have heard from his lips, but his gracious purpose towards us in respect to glory.

Thus he speaks in John, xvii. ; and thus he pleads for the lovers of his cross mightily with the Father : " Sanctify them through thy truth ; that they may be *one* as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they may be one in us. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them." And then he ascends from earthly to heavenly privileges, and shows what a vast field of blessings he has in store for them that shall believe on his name : " Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." And here is the word of Jesus, and that word pledged to you, that if you are children you shall be heirs with him, in a close and indissoluble union ; *fellow-sufferers* in a weak humanity, and glorified together in the strength of those covenant bonds, which are immutable and eternal.

This state of yet unseen, untasted, and perhaps unwished-for blessedness, may be ours. The *vilest*, the weakest, the most despairing, are not too low for it. But you have heard, what the necessary step *is*, to arrive at it. " If so be that we suffer with Christ, that we may be also glorified together." Ah ! brethren, how many are there whom we dearly love, for whose souls we are wrestling in prayer daily, who *dream* of this glory, but who have never realized the *suffering* ; who are ready to seize upon mercy, but who hate the way that points to it. It is sad to measure the Christianity of such as these, to know how largely they are in need of every thing, and to see how recklessly they imagine that they are in need of nothing ; who cannot fix upon one point wherein Christ is a precious Saviour, or tell in what one way they are distinguished from an ungodly world. This is poor knowledge, miserable wisdom, for dying sinners. I never yet read a Scripture which told me, " Whatever thou art, be at ease, O creature of sense ; poor in spirit, or high-minded—deep in the world, or crucified to its power—thou shalt, in any case, have your portion in glory." But thus runs the word of the everlasting Gospel : If ye be dead with Christ, ye shall also live with him—" If so be that ye suffer with him, ye shall be glorified together."

## NOAH'S PRESERVATION AND SACRIFICE.

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“ And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark ; and God made a wind to pass over the earth and the waters asswaged. And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord ; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.”—GENESIS, viii. 1 and 20.

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This passage introduces us to a new world. A period of sixteen hundred and fifty years had now elapsed since the creation. During that space the great scheme of infinite mercy, based upon the covenant of grace, was gradually unfolded. The Redeemer, “ whose goings forth were of old from everlasting,” had commenced his mediatorial work. The Holy Spirit, although not yet beheld under any visible symbol, sustained his condescending office in the regeneration of the soul. A Church, consisting of true believers in “ the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” was formed. Sacrifices were instituted, as a significant part of religious worship, as an expressive act of faith in the great doctrine of the atonement, on the part of those who presented them, and an instructive system of appropriate types of the future coming of Christ, who was “ to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Abel was gone to glory as the first martyr to the truth. “ Enoch was translated that he should not see death.” And many a saint, though less distinguished, but not less known to Him “ who is the head of his body, the Church,” had entered into rest, having been “ redeemed from among men, as the first fruits unto God and the Lamb.” But whilst the antediluvian Church was thus gradually rising under the agency of the Son of God, and of the Spirit of God, by the accession of converted persons, principally among the descendants of Seth, the ungodly race of Cain were rapidly multiplying in numbers and increasing in sin, till at length the earth was overspread with infidelity and licentiousness, groaned under the accumulated burden of human guilt, and was ripe for the sickle of destruction. To accelerate this fatal crisis, the professed believers in the promised Saviour, called “ the sons of God” in a former chapter, instead of maintaining their integrity by an unflinching adherence to their religious principles, thereby exhibiting a bold and determined front against the corruptions of the age, so far declined in the tone of their piety as to form matrimonial alliances with these licentious pagans, termed “ the daughters of men.” The consequences of such delinquency were, a total departure from the faith and practice of their pious forefathers—an awful amalgamation of the Church with the world—the abolition of the worship of God—the disappearance of true religion centering in

the sacrifice of Christ, and formed by the Divine Spirit, and, with the solitary exception of Noah and his family, a total abandonment of piety and morality to the unbridled sway of corrupt passions and appetites.

The effect of such reckless depravity was tremendous. The Spirit of God was insulted and grieved. Mercy, long slighted and contemned, threw down the olive branch, and retired. Justice, fearlessly defied, came forth to the vacant seat of divine administration. The ark, designed as a refuge for the faithful Noah, being completed, the favoured family, headed by the venerable patriarch, and accompanied by a chosen number of all the diversified classes of the animal creation, entered it; and the judgments of the Lord begun. "The windows of heaven" are opened, and the skies, forty days and forty nights, pour forth an unabating torrent. The fountains of the great deep, hitherto restrained, are unsealed; and the sea, bursting its embankment, deluges the plains, and gains upon the highest hills. The beasts of the field and creeping things of the earth run to and fro in wild confusion, seeking in vain for a shelter. The strong and healthy among men, in a phrenzy of despair, flee to the mountains, leaving the aged and infirm to the incursions of the flood. Parents, with their children clinging to them, in terror pursue the same course, drenched by the pitiless storm; some failing in the attempt, others gaining some neighbouring height, but only to perish there. Still the rain descends: the flood rises; provisions fail; one spot of elevated land after another disappears, till at last every refuge is destroyed—every creature is engulfed—and all, all is silent, but the hoarse triumph of the storm. Thus you perceive, my dear hearers, that God has judgments as well as mercies, and is faithful to his threatenings as well as to his promises. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." Though the Great Eternal bear long, he will not bear always. Where now was the arrogant boasting of these impenitent sinners? Where was *their* security from danger who thought of concealment amid the masses of an ungodly world and who perhaps said, when expostulated with, as many sneeringly reply in the present day, "We shall be as well off as our neighbours?"

Thus the old world was destroyed by a deluge; a solemn type of its final destruction by a sea of fire at the last day, when "the earth and all that is therein shall be burnt up." The Church, now reduced to one family, was delivered from its scoffing enemies. The works and servants of Satan, hitherto triumphant, were overthrown, and brought to nought; thereby proving the truth of the promise, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent," whilst the grace, faithfulness, and power of the Redeemer, were strikingly displayed in the preservation of Noah; which shews us that however few in number, exposed, despised, unpopular, "the Lord knoweth them that are his."

Whilst the eye, traversing this watery waste, thus surveys the justice and mercy of the Most High, there is one object in particular, and only one, which remains untouched by the destroying angel—uninjured by the storm from above, or the waves from beneath; it is **THE ARK**, fit emblem of the Church in the world. *By whom was it planned?* By Him who is the author of salvation. *How was it formed?* Like the great cause of religion, by human instrumentality under divine superintendency. *What did it contain?* The family of God—the servants of the Redeemer—the holy seed—the only link by which the old and



new world of believers were to be united—with all the different creatures which had been drawn thither by the power of God, as the only refuge from surrounding destruction. How wonderful was their association! How readily did they enter their merciful retreat! How harmoniously did they dwell, although so opposite in their respective dispositions! How well were they supplied, though so numerous! How safely did they exist! Not a life was lost. Not a leak was formed in the stately structure which contained them. All were fed. All were kept by the power of God, until the appointed time of their liberation. Who does not instantly advert to the promise of the Redeemer, in reference to the ultimate success of his reign: “If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me?” And when his people shall thus be made willing in the day of his power, “when all things shall be subdued unto him,” how beautifully will the prediction of the prophet be fulfilled, of which the scene in the ark presented so pleasing a type: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand upon the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

But observe the *situation* of the ark. It was upon the face of the great waters, in the midst of a storm. Thus it is with the Church in the world, where “deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Jehovah’s waterspouts; whilst all his waves and billows go over us.” Yet, without an earthly pilot, or sails, or helm, or human skill and assistance, how safely did the mighty structure ride! What could Noah do? What could his family do? Not any thing. They had followed divine direction, and had employed the means prescribed, so far as they could be used; and they were now passive in the hands of God, wholly dependent upon his providence and grace. This is our case. We are shut up in the ark of the Gospel: we are navigating the sea of life: we are in a storm. As far as means are availing, they should be employed in humble dependence upon the God of the means; when they fail, we should cast our entire care upon the Lord, and he will sustain us. Nor shall we be disappointed, as we have the promise, “Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.” With such a promise the Christian may be shut up in the chamber of affliction, or in the house of mourning, or in the confines of a vessel, and yet he can enjoy communion with God, and feel perfect safety, sweetly whispering,

“We may, like the ships, by tempests be tost  
On perilous deeps, but cannot be lost:  
Though Satan enrages the wind and the tide,  
The promise engages the Lord will provide.”

What the feelings of this favoured family were on entering the ark, as they looked upon the earth for the last time, which was devoted to so severe a visitation, may be better imagined than described. There were the strong emotions

of *pity and compassion* for those who were doomed to destruction. Many of these unhappy persons were their neighbours and acquaintances. Some, it is probable, assisted in the erection of that mighty structure. Some may have been attendants on Noah's ministry, and possibly gave occasional indications of seriousness. And others may have been once ranked as members of the antediluvian Church, but were led away by the corruptions of the age, and conformity to the world; but all perished. To these emotions of pity, were added those of *wonder and awe*, as they heard the storm descend, and felt their peaceful habitation rising and floating upon the flood. What lofty conceptions they must have had of the power of God, "who doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth; while none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" Such was the astonishment of the disciples upon the sea of Gennesaret, when their Lord arose, and rebuked the storm, and they exclaimed, "What manner of man is this! for even the winds and the sea obey him." These sensations of wonder and awe were doubtless succeeded by *gratitude and praise* for their merciful preservation—that they were made to differ from the ungodly—that they had another spirit, and were sheltered from destruction, whilst others were overwhelmed under the sin-avenging hand of God.

These are *still* the feelings of the Christian when surveying the prevalence and punishment of sin. Though he deplores its existence, and pities those who are smarting under the scourge, it excites his thankfulness for converting grace; it inspires his song; it leads him to exult,

" Why was I made to hear thy voice,  
And enter while there's room?  
When thousands make a wretched choice,  
And rather starve than come?"

What, then, will be our emotions at the last day, when Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe; when we shall enjoy an everlasting deliverance from sin and sorrow, and shall be for ever with the Lord; whilst the wicked are turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

But though Noah and his family were thus safely sheltered in this merciful retreat, they were not to *remain* there. The text informs us that "the Lord remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark, and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters asswaged."

What an honour, what a privilege to have a place in the favourable recollection of the Most High! Who that values his condescending regard can omit to pray, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour which thou bearest to thy people." He does remember his people for good. He did remember us in our low estate, and he still declares, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." So that we may exult with the grateful Psalmist, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me."

In noticing the incidents which were connected with the gradual cessation of the flood, we are forcibly reminded of some of the occurrences of the Gospel dispensation. The *wind*, by the agency of which the *waters* were abated, calls

to our recollection the breath from the Lord, by which the dry bones were animated in Ezekiel's vision, and the holy, vivifying influence of the Spirit, of which the Redeemer spoke to Nicodemus, and which he conferred upon the disciples, when "he breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" which shews us that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," and that when the Comforter descends in the time of trouble, the deepest waters subside, and the darkest scenes are cheered. The departure of *the raven* from the ark, which, as a bird of prey feasted upon the slain as they floated upon the surface of the flood, resembles the ungodly, who, having been under the restraints of religious discipline for a season, in pious families, or in churches, in which they have been unworthy members, at length obtain their liberty, and gladly seize the corruptions and refuse of the world, for which they possess a lamentable congeniality of taste. But notice the *gentle dove*; she also was sent forth, but finding no place for the sole of her foot, and being disinclined to the impure gratifications of the raven, returned back again. Here, in this innocent emblem of constancy, affection, and purity, we see the genuine believer. He, too, must go forth into the world like the sinner; but he is not at home there—finds no food for his soul there—and gladly returns again to the ark of the Gospel, and to the presence of his God, and cries as he enters that asylum of mercy, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." At length, on being sent forth a second time, the faithful dove returned with an olive leaf. Thus it is with the Redeemer, who brings peace to his people, and upon whom the Spirit sat like a dove. Thus it is with the Comforter, the *Holy Ghost*, whom the Lord promised to send in his Father's name. And thus it should be *with us*. Have we relatives or friends who are shut up in the chamber of sickness, in the season of trouble, in the house of mourning, or in a state of captivity to sin and Satan? Let us carry them the olive-leaf. Let us tell them of the good Physician; of the doctrine of reconciliation; the blood of the cross; the consolations of the Gospel; the hope of glory; of the ability and willingness of the Lord Jesus to save unto the very uttermost.

At length the Patriarch ventured to remove the covering from the ark, "and behold the face of the ground was dry." What must have been his feelings? What were *yours* when the waters of affliction subsided? What will they be when you survey "the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness?" But however desirous Noah and his family were to enjoy their liberty, after more than twelvemonths' confinement, though a merciful confinement, it does not appear that they took one step without Divine permission. Like faithful servants and obedient children, they waited for orders. Until the Lord gave the command they were willing to remain where they were. This is worthy of our recollection. We should never adopt a new enterprise, or proceed in any new direction, but as our heavenly Guide takes the lead. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps;" and we may be assured that those who wait and look for Him, shall not wait in vain. Hear the testimony of David: "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he heard my cry;" and his advice, "Wait upon the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, upon the Lord."

You will now be anxious to ascertain, what was Noah's first act on going forth from the ark. "And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord and took of

every clean beast and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar." This is a fine specimen of his gratitude for his preservation. And what a lovely soul-inspiring spirit is this! It is the genuine feeling of the Christian's affection and fidelity, which leads him to exclaim, "I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth;" and which constrains him to inquire, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" Thus he erected an altar for his God, before he built a house for himself. This was a proper acknowledgement of his dependence upon the Providence and grace of Him to whom he felt infinitely indebted for the salvation of his soul, and the preservation of his family. He therefore very properly determined not to employ a hand, not to fix a stake, or stretch a cord for a tent until he had avowed his faith in Christ by burnt-offerings and sacrifices, and dedicated himself anew to the glory and service of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Here is an example worthy of the imitation of young persons, urging you to "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;" a pattern for those who are entering into social life, to commence their course with God—for invalids on recovering from sickness—for mourners on being delivered from trouble. In each of these cases, the claims of the Redeemer demand our first consideration. Let us erect a similar Ebenezer to that which Samuel set up, when he cried, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me." But this was a *family* altar: my dear hearers, have you such an one? Recollect that "the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the righteous." I pity that family in which the Bible is seldom or never read, and in which the voice of social prayer and praise is never heard. What must angels think as they pass by such graceless tenements in a Christian land?

But observe what the patriarch offered. Not the blind, and the lame; not the refuse, and the unclean; but the best of his little flock, amounting to a seventh portion of his property. The stock of living creatures were so much reduced, that a worldly, selfish mind, might have pleaded an excuse for delaying such valuable victims in sacrifice until their number was increased by propagation, or would have presented others of less utility as a substitute. Noah, however, had another spirit, and illustrated that divine axiom, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses with new wine." We may rest assured, that what is consecrated to the Lord, or devoted to the welfare of our fellow-creatures, from evangelical motives, will never be missed. Did the widow's barrel of meal and cruse of oil diminish because she fed the prophet? Did Noah's six couple of beasts and birds increase more slowly because the seventh pair was devoted in sacrifice? Yet how many excuse themselves, because their means are slender, forgetting the widow's mite, and the pleasing fact, that when there is a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. You will find a fine specimen of self-denying generosity in 1 Corinthians, viii.

And how significantly and graciously did the Lord accept the offering of his grateful servant! "The Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake." Whoever came with a proper sacrifice in a proper spirit without being received? "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou



wilt not despise." But it was not merely the victims which were slain, nor the occasion on which they were offered, nor from a regard to the party who presented them, which gave rise to the announcement in the text. It was the spirit in which they were dedicated; it was the reference which they bore to the atoning sacrifice of Christ, as "a Lamb without spot and without blemish," of which these burnt offerings were an obvious type. This sacrifice was founded upon the covenant of grace; it originated in Divine appointment; it shadowed forth the sufferings and death of the Redeemer; it was offered with genuine Christian feelings of humiliation for sin, faith in the doctrine of expiation by the substitution of the Son of God, with love, self-dedication, gratitude, and praise; thus, like the offering of Abel, "the Lord had respect unto it," and this produced "the sweet savour" particularized in the text. An occurrence somewhat similar is recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Book of Exodus. "And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men which offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar." "Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved-work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness, (fit emblem of the light and beauty of the Gospel dispensation.) And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God and did eat and drink." Such was the result of the propitiatory sacrifices which had been offered, and such is still the effect of the blood of the cross.

But this was not all; as a visible and perpetual demonstration of the Divine regard, "God spake unto Noah, and to his sons, saying, And I, behold I, will establish my covenant with you and with your seed after you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth." This covenant of preservation was evidently based upon the covenant of grace, so called because its origin, contents, and consequences, are all illustrative and confirmatory of the free and unmerited favour of the ever blessed Trinity, elsewhere called, "the sure mercies of David." This "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," antecedently made for the benefit of true believers, was now repeated to Noah, to strengthen his faith, to banish his fears, and to secure to him and his posterity the rich enjoyment of those inestimable blessings which have been obtained by our Lord Jesus Christ, who is emphatically called the Messenger and Mediator of that covenant. Of the importance which the blessed Jehovah attached to that valuable compact, we may form a correct opinion by a reference to the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah: "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed: but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." In this kind consolatory manner the God of love soothes his afflicted Church.

Let us now turn, for the last time, to the Patriarch and his children. What

an interesting group do they form ! In what an important service, on a most memorable occasion, were they engaged—presenting themselves before the Lord—celebrating their merciful deliverance by a typical sacrifice ! But what is meant by that majestic arch, which perhaps at that moment appeared in the heavens decked with beauty ; throwing a soft and lovely reflection upon the earth ; and encircling the altar which Noah had erected, the sacrifice which he offered, and the little party which surrounded it ? The twelfth verse is a reply : “ And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you for perpetual generations : I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.” What a lovely picture ! How soft, glowing, significant, instructive ! Look at the *varied colours* of the bow. What an emblem of the exuberant fulness of the covenant of grace with all its rich variety of spiritual and temporal blessings. *How is the bow formed ?* By the sun shining through a shower upon a dark cloud. Thus the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his beams, shining through the afflictions of life upon this dark vale of tears, presents the symbol of mercy—“ the bow of promise mid the storm.” But *survey its majestic form*. It is a triumphal arch ; as if it were set up to memorialize some grand achievement. Is it not so ? The conquest of earth and hell by our all-conquering Lord and Saviour. That majestic figure stretching across the horizon includes within its ample range, a vast extent of territory and population ; and having thus embraced them in its span, decked them with its beauties by reflection, and covered them like a canopy of glory, rises to the very heaven of heavens, and forms the basis of the throne of God and the Lamb. How exactly this beautiful picture harmonizes with the scene which was beheld by Ezekiel and John, may be witnessed by a reference to the first chapter of the Prophet's writings, and to the fourth chapter of the Book of Revelations.

While we thus gaze with rapture upon this sign and seal of the covenant of grace, we cannot help exclaiming, how different is this symbol of mercy to that bow which is spoken of by the Psalmist. Speaking of the judgments which the Lord has prepared for the ungodly he declares, “ He hath bent his bow, he hath made ready his arrows upon the string.” *This* is the emblem of war—that in the heavens is the emblem of peace. This was formed for destruction—that for salvation. This was made by justice—that by infinite mercy. This is an instrument of death—that the insignia of life. This bends downwards to alarm and repel—that bends upwards (the threatening side being turned away like the Lord's anger), to cherish our confidence and hope. The bow spoken of by David was strung, and bent ready to strike the fatal blow : the bow seen by Noah, Ezekiel, and John, was unstrung, unbent, unarmed ; a bow of light and love, an ark of peace and mercy.

Thus we see of how much importance it is to be in a state of salvation. There is no danger, no anger, no ground for fear, as “ there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus,” like Noah in the ark.

We learn how readily the Lord accepts a devotional sacrifice when it is offered by faith in the Lord Jesus ; let this therefore encourage you to “ come boldly to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need.” Bring the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite spirit. Trust in the great High Priest of your profession ; he waits to be gracious.

Whenever you behold the rainbow, think of Noah ; think of the covenant of grace, the plan of salvation, the Sun of Righteousness, the beauties of holiness, the peace and joy in believing, which are the privilege and the portion of true believers.

Let the recollection of the deluge teach the ungodly, the impenitent, the worldly-minded professor, and the backslider, the certain punishment which awaits the commission of sin. God has threatened it, he will execute it. "He that being often reprov'd, yet hardeneth his neck, shall be destroyed suddenly and that without remedy."

And finally, let us view the ark as an emblem of the Gospel of Christ, of that refuge which is set before. This was the only retreat from the flood, and covert from the storm, and no one was advantaged by it, but those who entered it. It was not enough that the people *saw* it, or *knew* it, or even *assisted* in rearing it, all who were *without* perished. Thus it is still. "There is none other name given unto men whereby we can be saved but Jesus Christ, neither is there salvation in any other." He that fleeth to him for safety and believeth in him to the salvation of the soul, shall not be confounded world without end. But "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

## THE DESIGN AND BENEFIT OF CHASTISEMENT

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"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."—HEBREWS, xii. 11.

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THE Apostle had encouraged the saints of God, to whom he had addressed this letter, by telling them that whom God chastened he chastened in love: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten:" "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth:" leading them thereby to draw the opposite conclusion to which sight and sense would lead them, that, (so far are they from being tokens of God's displeasure and wrath), they are among the brightest evidences of their Father's tenderness and love.

He cheered them also by telling them it is not for his own pleasure that the Lord chasteneth his children, though earthly parents sometimes do so. Do not understand the passage as if it were to be interpreted "according to his whim;" because that is not evidence of a kind, tender, and wise Father (and it is the conduct of such a father that is brought before us), but according to the best of their judgment, though often mistaken, often wrong, often out of the way: yet He never; always—not only intentionally, but absolutely and directly, for our profit—accomplishing in the end his own purpose, and making it effectual.

But lest they should consider that, after all, the chastening of their Father might be very light things, and consequently might draw very painful conclusions when they found them *heavy* things, he adds the words of the text: "Now no chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous:" these things are not given as if they were joyous things, nor light, nor trifling things; but because they are grievous things—because they bring grief, and occasion grief. He seems also to encourage them by this; that, even if they did grieve under them, it was no sin, because they are grievous things in themselves to flesh and blood, and often grievous to the spirit; not merely to that which is flesh and blood, but that which is spiritual in us; designed to be so. And he encourages them by the blessed tendency and issue of chastisement: "Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

Now in discoursing from these words, there are two points of view in which I desire the subject may be regarded. O that the Holy Spirit may lead our minds into the very marrow, and substance, and sweetness of the truth; that



we may find it to be the truth, and rejoice in the truth, and acknowledge it to be the truth of God, in our own hearts, to the glory of his grace

In the first place, consider what the Apostle says of chastening: "No chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous;" and secondly, the blessing which a gracious God has attached to it: "Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby."

With regard to the first point, it seems almost a truism, an assertion so palpable, and evidently true, that it were needless to make it: and yet we do not find it so, either in our own experience, or in the experience of God's dear people. A chastening that had nothing of grievousness in it, were no chastening at all. If the Lord lays his hand upon us, and we feel and esteem it not to be his hand, all the blessed effects of it are lost to us. I do not wish you to enter into that state of confessing, "I feel it to be no cross at all:" I wish to the Lord that you did; for the Lord so ordained it, and, sooner or later, he will cause you to know it to be a cross. Certainly, his hand unfelt is not the channel by which he conveys blessings to our souls. The Lord chasteneth his child, and sometimes he chasteneth him sorely too. If we look into the history of Moses we find it so: if we look into the history of Job we find it so: if we look into the history of Jacob we find it so: and I believe most of us shall find it so in our own history; (which, after all, is the most interesting history to us, the history of our Lord Jesus Christ alone excepted.)

We find from the thirty-ninth Psalm, that David found the chastisement of the Lord to be no light matter: "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee;" under the precious conviction of God being his God—his hope, his rest, and his delight being in God. "Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it. Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand. When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." You find the same truth in Psalm cxviii. 18. By whomsoever the Psalm is written, whether David or not, the experience is to us the same, and the same testimony. "The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over to death." The chastisement was not joyous, but grievous. When the Apostle Paul besought the Lord thrice that that "messenger of Satan" which afflicted him, might depart from him, do you not think he felt it a heavy pressure? He found it no light thing: and I bless God he has not revealed to us what it was. If there had been one peculiarly heavy trial unfolded, we should have individualized that trial, and looked only to that or similar trials: but when we see it was that which made the Apostle "groan, being burdened," drove him to a throne of grace, and made him thrice beseech the Lord for deliverance, we see that he felt it no slight matter to be under the correcting hand of his God.

There is, in the correction that we receive from the hand of God, something which impresses on our mind the solemn reflection that it arises from sin. I do not say, always from the *outbreking* of sin; but I do say, from the *indwelling* of sin. And in that land where sin shall dwell no more in the hearts of God's people, there shall be no correction, for there will be no need of any. In the case of the Apostle, we do not find that "the thorn in the

flesh" was for the correction of the outbreking of sin, but we are assured it was for the indwelling of sin: it was to prevent that outbreking of sin which he had in his flesh, wherein there dwelleth nothing that is good. There is always this solemn truth connected with every correction we receive from the hand of God—by whatever channel, or through whatever medium, it is conveyed, whether immediately from God himself, or through the medium of our own folly: we have to remember that the cause of every chastisement is sin; that, if there were no sin in us, there could be no need of correction. Therefore there is always in that consideration a reflection of grievousness.

Then, as it comes from a Father who loves us, and who loves us well, if there were not a needs-be for it there would not be a feather's weight laid on the heart of his child. He loves his people: they are dear to him as the apple of his eye; and he that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye. Would he touch them, they being dear to him as the apple of his eye, if there was not an absolute necessity for it? The very necessity, as coming from a Father's hand, inflicts more real grievousness on the child's heart, than if it came from the hand of the magistrate. "What! does my *Father* see all this necessity for chastening? 'Then what must there be in my heart, and what there must be in my flesh, to require it!'" These are the reflections that spring out of a right contemplation of the chastisement of God: and I am persuaded, the more your hearts are walking with God, the more conscious you will be of the truth of these words in your own souls.

There is something in the very things themselves that are grievous. They may be long endured, year after year may pass over, and yet leave the same cross upon us. And the reason is, because there is the same necessity, and the same love: the same cause existed, and the Lord gave us the same proof of his love. That heavy trial—that domestic cross; O I will not go through them: you need not from my lips any description how heavy a cross God can make a little circumstance to you. The things which we now look back upon, and almost wonder at our folly that ever we should have thought them such heavy crosses, were heavy at the time, and meant to be heavily felt by us, and were the appointment of our God. Our very constitution, our very formation, our individual case, as it were, rendered them heavy trials: and all of them were needful, beloved, and in God's covenant "ordered in all things, and sure." There is in them something painful; but while the neck is fitted for the yoke, the yoke is fitted for the neck. In the very trial that the Lord has laid upon you, he has met you especially in that very circumstance, where perhaps you least expected him.

Now all this makes the grievousness: there is something in it that is painful to our flesh, and oftentimes very trying to our spirit. Never was a heavy cross laid on a child of God yet, but there was in that cross a tendency to stir up indwelling corruption. As it is intended more especially for the trial of graces, for the trial of what God has wrought in us; so it is the means of stirring up inbred corruption: and this very circumstance is in itself no small trial.

Do any of you seem to smile at this, as if it were a mere imagination of the mind? What! when the favourite gourd has been withered? What! when the favourite cistern has been broken? What! when the favourite tie has been snapt asunder? What! when God has shown you, as it were, that it must be

the Isaac that he has? Is there nothing in that which, unless subdued by the grace of God, stirs up indwelling corruption. And am I making *excuses* for it? I think that man's religion lies much on the surface, who imagines that. I am only saying what a *tendency* there is in that cross; and what a lesson it affords to watch over it, to take to the Lord, and lay at the foot of the cross of his dear Son, that which is dear to us through our depravity, through our corruption, through our flesh, wherein there dwelleth nothing that is good.

There being, then, a grievousness in the cross, there is no sin in our grieving under it, unless our grief be excessive. If indeed we overlook our mercies, if we look off from God's promises, if we think more of our trials than of God's mercies, if we think more of our correction than of our sin, if we are more engaged with our present pressure than with the present promise of our God, then have they wrought sin in us. But, beloved, be assured of this: many a precious flower groweth up in the shade; many a precious fruit groweth up in the quietness of retirement and secret meditation with God. So many a soul, retiring from the eyes of our fellow-men, and quietly submitting itself to God, shall find some of the most precious fruits of his Holy Spirit growing up there, to the praise and glory of God.

Now we have just looked at the outline of our first head, that "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." It was not intended to be joyous; it was intended to be grievous. It was not intended to be joyous; and it is needful that he who makes that mistake should be admonished, "Take heed that ye despise not the chastening of the Lord."

My dear friends, if our souls were more alive to God, if our hearts were more endued with his love, if we were led to walk more in nearness of communion with him, we should be more sensible of his rebukes: and when he speaks to us, either through the unkindness of the world, or through the mistakes of God's children, or through the suggestions of Satan, remember that even Satan has only power to go so far, and no farther: and if you disbelieve this, you live in the region of second causes, which is but the next to that of secret atheism. If you only take away from the living God, the ordering of all the concerns of his people—if you do but suffer one wheel in your machinery to run in its own power, and by its own mechanism, then you bring confusion into the machine altogether. O for that wisdom from above that can trace the living God in every cross, submit to him under every chastisement, and see his truth written on it all!

Observe, secondly, there is a peculiar blessing connected with this chastening of the Lord.

In the first place, observe, "*it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.*" The dealings of God with us have in view the making us fruitful, that we may "bring forth more fruit." Observe what our Lord says in the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it"—he pruneth it. And how does he prune it? He cutteth off the dead branches; he cutteth out the suckers; he makes deep incisions into the rind and bark of the tree: (and it is sometimes with no light hand that that is accomplished, beloved.) But what is the object of this pruning? It is "that ye may bring forth more fruit."

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it," he pruneth it, "that it may bring forth more fruit." This is the end of all his fatherly discipline. "It yieldeth the fruit of righteousness." What is that "fruit of righteousness?" Is it our justification before God? O let the saints of God shout aloud for joy; let them bless the living God for all the marvellous display of his most marvellous grace, that that work in which they stand accepted in the Beloved, is a work *out* of themselves, from beginning to end; that that righteousness, (blessed be God!) from the beginning of it to the end of it, in life and in death, amidst all our ebbs and flows, amidst all our trials, temptations, sinkings, strugglings, and inward warfare—that that work in which we stand accepted before God, is a righteousness out of ourselves entirely. Nothing can be added to it; nothing can be taken from it; all the chastisements of God do not add a single thread to this rope. There is a sentiment of an old divine which I have often admired—I desire to live in it, and to die in it: "If from this moment I had all the purity of angels, all the sanctity of seraphs, all the immaculate love of the pure spirits made perfect, I would part with all to stand before God in the righteousness of Christ." Rather than make the perfections of those holy beings my ground of acceptance, I would desire to lay aside every thing, to be found in the righteousness of Christ, in which his people are made the righteousness of God before God.

This is a truth that we need to be built up in continually. I desire to ~~see~~ this people panting after the fruits of the Spirit, just as a starving man pants after food. I desire to see their hearts aspire after conformity to the divine image, just as the spark flieth upward. I desire to see them estimate the value of the Gospel, by the ultimate effect it produces upon their hearts. I desire that they would look more to what is God's great end, and that is, their restoration to himself, and their walking with him in this vale of tears as children with a father. I pray that the living God would lay these things more deeply on your hearts than ever you have yet felt them, that they may be the object of your daily prayer—yea, your earnest, fervent, inward prayer; that it may be the resolute bent of your souls to aim after an unreserved conformity to the will of God in all things. But with regard to our grand standing in the court of God's justice, this is our glory, and this is the perfection of the saints of God, that they are made the righteousness of God in the Son of God; a higher righteousness, a brighter righteousness, a more glorious righteousness, than all angels and archangels can have; the righteousness of Him who is God in our nature; and who has infused, as it were, the whole glory of his person in the perfection of his work.

Now, what are these fruits of righteousness? The Apostle speaks of them in 2 Corinthians, ix. 10, where he prays, "Now he that ministereth seed to the sower, doth minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase *the fruits of your righteousness.*" Observe what he prays for in Philippians, i. 9. (O that the Apostle's prayers were at all times a pattern for our prayers! O that we always looked at his prayers, saying, "This is a pattern for my prayers!") "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of



Christ; being filled with *the fruits of righteousness*, unto the glory and praise of God." Here we see what is the tendency of his fatherly chastisement: "It yieldeth," says the Apostle, "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." "It yieldeth:" there is something peculiarly sweet and powerful in its being in the present tense. It has a direct tendency, it has a present tendency, it has a continual tendency to yield fruit in its season: not merely one fruit, but fruits, varied fruits; all the varied, all the blessed fruits of the Spirit, in your lives and in your conversation; that ye may prove yourselves an accepted people, to manifest the reality of that work of grace upon your souls, in a conformity to the will and image of God.

There are two ways, I conceive, in which the fatherly chastisement of our God yieldeth the fruit of righteousness. In the *first* place, it has a tendency to take away sin. We read in Isaiah, xxvii. 9, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit, *to take away his sin.*" To take out the indwelling of it? That is not in the covenant: but there is in the power of God's chastening hand, alighting upon his children's bosom, in the hands of the Eternal Spirit, an efficacy to detect a man's sins, to show them to him, to bring to light his iniquities, to make him see and feel what there is in his heart. It is a truth never to be lost sight of: Undetected sin is unmortified sin. As there is in all chastisement this special direction, that it not only stirs up in God's hand the graces of his own Spirit, but it is the means of stirring up what there is of evil in us, and of bringing us to see it; so is it the means of laying the axe at the root of it, and leading us to see and feel what an evil thing it has been that has led us to depart from the living God. I believe that many a child of God has, through his fatherly teaching, learned more of the secret of his own depravity in one hour of trial, than he has in the circuit of a hundred sermons. He did right in attending to hear them, and he could not have neglected them without bringing sin on his conscience. But in the midst of some heavy trial, some heavy cross, the Holy Spirit taught him more of the evil of sin than perhaps he had learned in all the previous stages of his journey. Now as there is in nature's ploughing, that which breaks up the ground, that which goes through the thistles and briers, and tears up the thorns, so is it also in God's appointed means for cherishing the work of righteousness, to lead a man to pant after God; to lead him from a weariedness from the world; to detect the emptiness of the creature; to make a man see the brokenness of his own cistern; and to put his seal upon the breaking band of his God, so that he can assent and consent to the hand that has broken that cistern.

These are precious fruits. You may say, Do they not lead to outward fruit? My brethren, if God has thy *heart*, he has thy *life*. Many a man can bring him the outward conduct, and keep the heart for himself and the world. But if God has the sinews of thine heart, he will have the outbreathing of thy life. And here in this school see how the Holy Ghost breaketh off from self, detacheth from sin, and leadeth to God: in the midst of the perishing creature does he exalt the throne of the imperishable God. I believe we get more acquainted with God in the midst of some heavy trial, than perhaps in all the day of our sunshine together. We are led to say, "I could not have suspected for a moment there had been that kindness in God: I could not have believed

it possible that he would have stooped to my infirmities: I could not have believed it was in his heart to attend to that little thing in my life: I could not believe it conceivable that the great and eternal God, that dwelleth in light which no man can approach unto, would attend to my weaknesses, my constitutional weaknesses, my very infirmities, and depravities, and corruptions; and yet, while he sees them all, say, No one shall see them but myself." It is in this school the Holy Ghost leadeth us to the production of those fruits of righteousness that are here spoken of; not merely outward in the life, but inward in the heart, and *then* outward in the life.

They are spoken of as "*peaceable* fruits of righteousness." The chastenings of God are so blessed to the soul, that they come with a sweet and peaceable accent to the child of God. They say to him, "I have no wrath against thee; I have no long score for thee to pay; no, nor any unpaid penalty for thee to discharge; I have no unsettled grudge for thee to do away with." There is nothing in the chastening of God that has this aspect to his child: and when we receive it as his children, his hand comes to us bringing forth peaceable fruits. God, though he chastens, is at peace with us through Jesus Christ. "The chastisement of our peace was laid upon him; and with his stripes we are healed;" so that there is not one drop of wrath in the cup which he giveth us to drink. There may be much religion in that soul, of which the saint of God that is nearest to it knows nothing at all: in the meek, quiet taking of the yoke; in a willingness to endure; in a submissive will; in a resigned affection; in the placing the neck under the hand of God: no one taking notice of it but God himself. These are the "*peaceable* fruits of righteousness" which are here spoken of, to the praise and the glory of his grace.

I need not say how much they lead to all peaceable conduct towards our fellow-men. I believe most assuredly that when a man feels peace with God through Jesus Christ, he can say, as was once said, "I feel so much of God in my soul, that I cannot be angry with my fellow-men." As the peace of God prevails it softens, it subdues, it takes possession of, it quieteth the mind. It leadeth the soul to that great mystery of self-denial—a willingness to turn the right cheek, when smitten upon the left.

It is spoken of as "*afterwards*." There is a great power in that word "*afterwards*." Perhaps in the original it might have been as forcibly, if not more forcibly, translated, "*but afterwards*:" not exactly at the time. There is time taken in nature's ploughing, and there is time taken in the Lord's ploughing: and though it is a blessed thing to experience holy submission to the will of God, at the very time he lays his hand upon the neck; yet it is usually after reflection, after meditation, in quietness, in contemplating God's goodness and his past dealings, that the soul comes to its right state, and to confess, "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life."

Perhaps some of you can put your seal to this truth; you are constrained to acknowledge this to have been God's mercy to you, when he has taken you out of your trials, and brought you out of your temptations. Though in the midst of the storm, it was as much as you could do to look to that Jesus whom you thought to be asleep, yet *afterwards* you could clearly trace his guidance of the helm, and could clearly ascertain the progress of the vessel

towards the haven where it could be safe. Thus in the retrospect of past trials does the Lord work great and wonderful mercies to his people.

*"To those who are exercised thereby."* These blessings are connected with spiritual exercises. There is in the original word this idea: first of all they were stripped, in order to run; and being stripped, then they had to run. That is just what God does with us. He strips us of our self-confidence, of our self-wisdom, of self-righteousness; and then he leaveth us to run: and it is in the exercise of the soul, tried to the very uttermost, that the greatest blessings flow into the heart in the way of his fatherly chastisement. How patience can be tried—how faith can be tried—how hope, how strength, how wisdom can be tried in one single chastisement! And how that very chastisement can be the means of bringing out the grace that is in us! Had it not been for the accusation of drunkenness—"These men are drunken"—that grace, and courage, and self-denial, had not been exhibited by the Apostle Peter. He was accused of drunkenness, and then he stood up with his life in his hand. But what was the means of bringing out that holy courage? It was the wretched charge brought against him by the enemies of God, and by his enemies. What was it that at midnight induced Paul and Silas to sing praises to God? It was the persecution which they received from the jailer: and but for that correction, it had not been known that men could stay in a prison, though the doors were open, for conscience' sake, and could exhibit, with their feet in the stocks, what it is to bless, praise, and adore God for his mercies. Observe, it was by the circumstances ordained of God, that he brought out, in these exercised ones, the peaceable fruits of righteousness. It was in the very struggle of faith and of hope; it was in the very emergency. It is in our emergencies that God giveth us his greatest blessings, and the most munificent proofs of his love. I could appeal to many of you, and ask, Has not your extremity been God's opportunity? And when your heads have hung down, and your knees have been feeble; when you have looked perhaps to some special earthly friend, and rested on him, but when he came he was nothing, or he came not at all; and when this favourite resource was taken from you, what had you to do? You found the everlasting arms your strength; you brought forth "the peaceable fruits of righteousness."

The believer's path to heaven is not a summer's walk at evening. We know just as much of Christ as we experience of him; we know just as much of Christ as we have tried him. An untried Christ is to us an uncertain Christ. We are to learn amidst the vicissitudes of time, the infinite value of Immanuel. We are to learn, amidst the ruin of ourselves and the creatures, the infinite glories of our Jesus, who is of God made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

Now, in retracing my subject, I can only say, *how great the mercy is that chastisement is not vengeance!* Did you ever experience a sense of his vengeance in your heart? May I ask, What form does your Christianity present? Is it that of a summer's day Christianity, that looketh well, talketh well, and argueth well, and, in a sense, liveth well, as far as moral conduct goes? Or is it that sort of Christianity that has learned the value of a crucified Saviour in the region of your own destitution? Is it that sort of Christianity that has made

you find out the worth of Christ, in the deep conviction of your own worthlessness? I do not desire to bring you to the test of your conviction; but I ask you, What is Christ to you? What do you want him for? What do you think of his righteousness? The converse of that is manifestly this—What do you think of your own? For just as you have found out the worthlessness of your own, in that state, and in that degree alone, can the value of Christ's righteousness be found in your souls. What think ye of Christ? What do you know of a crucified Immanuel—of an Incarnate God? O, do not trifle with your souls. I will not. It is a light matter to come and hear; but, remember, you must listen to the trumpet of the archangel. There are few things (I say it not to pain the mind of any)—there are few things in this world that I lay less stress upon than the opinion of man concerning the state of my soul. Though I am thankful when the people of God speak well, and think well of me—though I am thankful to be approved of those whom God approves—yet I always think of what a brother, now in heaven, once said, “If all the ministers of Christ were to come to me at my death-bed, and tell me I was a child of God, I would say, No one can bring that to my conscience but God the Eternal Spirit himself.” We are thankful if our outward life brings no disgrace on our calling; we are thankful if our outward life does not make God's saints to hang their heads on our behalf. But take not the thing for granted; O, make sure work of salvation. The dying moment will come; that moment when you shall think as little of your families and those around you—when you shall think as little of the gratitude of your fellow-men, as if they had had no existence. What do you know of conversion work? What do you know of being born again? What do you know of having the Eternal Spirit dwelling in your heart? What do you know of a broken and contrite spirit, that mourneth for sin before the cross of the Son of God? Perhaps these words of mine may be as God's arrows within the joints of your harness; and you may have been sent here for a blessing, and I may have been sent here to be made a blessing unto you. It is an awful thought, that that which some think to be correction, may be God's vengeance. I think of the storm; I think of that moment when the world will fade away like a dream; and all I can say is this—Rely not upon separation with any; rely not upon union with any; rely not upon any ordinances; rely not upon a sense of obligation; rely not upon outward things; but may God give you grace to make sure work of your soul's salvation before the throne of God. Remember God's work will be tried; and what there is of good in it will be proved to be of God.

It is a mercy there is no wrath in the corrections of our God: they all come from a Father's heart, and they all come through the cross of the Son of God. If we could but unravel the mystery, we should need another vocabulary to that which some are ready to make for us. We sometimes hear from the lips of God's saints, “How favoured is that man's situation; every thing seems to smile on him: he has health, he has strength, he has friends; his circumstances are easy, and all seem to bless him on all sides.” If I were to call on him: I would say, “Is any merry, let him sing Psalms.” But if he is one of God's children, and thou livest long enough to see him, you shall find, that the Lord has his net for him; that the Lord has trials for him; that the Lord has changes for him. And then ask of his heart the effect of all this, and he will answer thus:



"My brother, I tell thee, the most favoured period of my life was that when I was brought to the lowest dust before God; and while I know I ought to have thanked God for providential mercies more than I did, yet I now see, that the greatest trials were amongst the chiefest of my blessings." And why? Because the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. There was no wrath in the cross, because it was a correcting hand; and a correcting hand, because there was a *needs-be* for it.

How needful it is to live by faith, to live above the exercise of our minds, to be more exercised thereby! How needful for us to live above ourselves! How little able you and I are to see the issue of what the Lord will bring out of the present emergency! And when, perhaps, by our bedsides we wrestle hard with God for a prayer—not wrestle *in* prayer, but wrestle, in a sense, that we *may* pray; when perhaps our knees are so feeble we can hardly stand upright; when our hands hang down, and we cannot lift them up as we ought to do in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving; when every thing seems to droop, and all things seem to sink: and yet what is the mystery the Lord is teaching thee? Live out of yourself; live upon Christ; live upon his fulness, as the blood of the atonement, as the "much incense," rising up, now that thou art brought to the lowest dust. "What *now*?" says unbelief. "Yes, now," says faith; "taking God at his word, and resting upon the unchangeable and unchanging Immanuel."

May our great concern be—what seems to be the great purpose of God in all his dealings with us—that we may "yield forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness." I love that word—"yield forth!" Not like a still, that *forceth* the drops; but like a fountain that floweth *freely*: not driven by necessity; not compelled by terror; not under dread and alarm; but under the drawings of God's mercy. May the Lord vouchsafe, as you go to your homes to-day, some sweet sense of his mercy, some sweet taste of his love, some realizing of his truth in your hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit! Then you shall say, "Welcome cross; welcome trial! I go home to my domestic affliction, but I have brought Christ with me; I find that Christ enough for me; I find his arm sufficient; and I do not look at it as I looked at it this morning: it seems another cross." It is the same; but through grace you see the arm of Jesus beneath you.

May God condescend to bless his word to your souls and my soul! May he make the word (in the fullest sense) a word in season to us, in *drawing* us nearer to Him, filling our hearts with adoring gratitude and praise!

## THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

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REV. J. WILLIAMS, A.M.

ST. ANNE'S CHURCH, LIMEHOUSE, FEBRUARY 22, 1835.

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"And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."  
LUKE, viii.8.

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MAN, by nature, is under a double condemnation. The curse of a violated law rests upon his head: for it is written, "The soul that sinneth it shall die;" and "The wages of sin is death." He is like a debtor, confined within the dreary cells of a prison, who owes ten thousand talents, and has nothing to pay. But besides this, there is a deep, inveterate, and deadly malady, eating like a canker within him. Not only has sin subjected him to perdition and woe, from which he is utterly unable to free his own soul; but it has poisoned his heart, blinded his understanding, alienated his affections, perverted his will. So totally depraved and corrupt is he, that from the sole of the foot even to the crown of the head, there is no soundness in him, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores: every imagination of the thought of his heart is evil, and that continually.

Now, if such be the double condemnation of every descendant of fallen Adam, you will perceive, brethren, that in order to a complete recovery, he stands in need of a two-fold remedy: there must be pardon and renewal; there must be justification and sanctification: neither one could do without the other. If pardon alone were afforded, if he were to restore to health only, the relief would be but partial; but if he be both forgiven and healed, the relief will be complete.

Now the Gospel of Jesus Christ amply provides for both. The Son of God descended from his throne of glory, and clothed in human nature, he paid the "rigid satisfaction, death for death." He has borne away the curse of the law; he has quenched the flame of the sword of justice in his own precious blood; he has paid the debt, even to the uttermost farthing: "Look unto me," he cries, "and be saved. Ye have destroyed yourselves, but in me is your help: I am your refuge, your rock, your foundation laid in Zion. Come, believe on me; and ye shall be justified from all things."

Being thus rescued from the bitter pains of death eternal, the Gospel proposes a remedy effectual to heal the spiritual diseases with which the whole inner man is infected. That remedy, brethren, is the grace of the Holy Spirit of God, purifying the corrupt heart, softening its hardness, illuminating its darkness, rectifying its perverseness, subduing its rebellion, and bringing every thought

into the obedience of Christ. Then this world becomes to the pardoned sinner a school of discipline; and the Bible, the book whence he derives his only food and comfort, his nourishment, his living brook in a thirsty land: and it is by means of reading, meditating upon, and praying over that book, that the Holy Spirit gradually accomplishes the cure of the sin-stricken soul, and raises it up to glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. I say *gradually*, because there is this important distinction between the work of Christ for us, and the work of the Spirit within us. Redemption is the complete finished work of divine grace, wrought out by Jesus Christ; and upon our repentance there is forgiveness and justification. But sanctification by the Spirit is progressive, like the processes of vegetation, consisting of several distinct acts: and these are generally advanced or retarded just in proportion as we improve or neglect the means of grace.

These means are the word of God. It is a seed (as you heard in the Gospel of to-day) which, when sown and received into the heart, by the power of God, brings forth a hundred fold. In this view, how important is the hearing of that word! Eternal consequences are at stake: the ministry of the Gospel is either a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death, to all who listen to it. This self-inquiry I desire to urge upon each of you, while I examine briefly "the Parable of the Sower."

The Sower is Jesus Christ, and those ministers whom he has called by his grace, and appointed by his providence, to preach the glad tidings of salvation. What are those tidings? Hear then: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Or in the words of the Saviour himself "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is the heavenly seed, which when mixed with faith in your heart, will grow up into holiness here, and will bloom in unfading blessedness hereafter.

But all have not this faith: here in this parable, out of the four classifications of hearers mentioned by our Saviour, only one is represented as bringing forth to perfection: the rest were hearers only, deceiving themselves.

The first which are here enumerated are *those by the way side*: "Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." When the sons of God come to present themselves before the Lord, Satan still comes among them. That accursed spirit is far too visible here, and far too successful among all who come to the house of God; turning the thoughts to some worldly object; blinding the understanding of some, and prejudicing the minds of others against the truth. What need, then, have we for watchfulness and mental prayer, that Satan may never hinder the work of God, nor take away the word out of our hearts!

These way-side hearers are mentioned first, because they constitute the greatest number of those who attend to means of grace. Their heart is hardened through being wrought upon their heart hardened through the

deceitfulness of sin. They are unmindful; they come to church from mere custom; never entering into the spiritual meaning of our truly scriptural and beautiful liturgy; nor yet even the sermon, except indeed it please their fancy: so that the very things which should be for their health, become unto them as a bane.

Brethren, see you not these characters exemplified in every-day life; persons who are seldom absent from public worship, yet are so little influenced by what they hear, that there is no change of heart, of conversation, of practice; but the world, its pleasures, and its pursuits, are still their grand objects? See you not this I say, and can you doubt the existence of way-side hearers in the world, or among yourselves?

And what is the cause of this? There is no preparation of heart for public ordinances. The Sabbath morning is not occupied in hallowed engagements. There may be a withdrawment from the business of the world; but there is no withdrawment from worldly thoughts. There is no earnest prayer, that the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit may accompany the revealed word; and there is no prayer heartily ascending, that the seed sown may be watered by the blessing of heaven: but, on the contrary, there is trifling conversation, idle gossip, or that abomination of our age—that engine which is diffusing its mischief, its poison, to every corner of this professedly Christian country—the Sunday newspaper. No wonder that to such, who merely attend the house of God out of form, and are absorbed in thoughts about the world, it should be an empty, fruitless, worthless engagement.

But there are some who pay a degree of attention to what they hear, who reflect upon it, and perhaps approve of it; but still they derive no permanent benefit from it. These are the characters which are next described by our Lord; *those on the rock*. “They on the rock are they which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.” Many unprejudiced minds, many warm imaginations, many affectionate hearts are here. They seem to promise fairly; but, alas! the flower withers in the bud. Those who come to this house merely for form and fashion’s sake, but have no pleasure in it, “receive the word,” as our Saviour says, “with joy.” What can there be to hinder its growth? Hear it from Him who knew what was in man: “These have no root in them.” Let the youthful professor especially attend to this. The root of all real religion is self-knowledge, self-abasement, self-renunciation. You must sink low under the conviction of your own sinfulness, or you will never rise in the experience of Christian holiness. You must be rooted and grounded in Christ, become the living branches of this spiritual vine, or the seed will die ere it is grown up.

The present is an age peculiarly fertile in stony-ground hearers. Religion, to a certain extent—religious profession, at least, to a certain extent—has become fashionable: it is no longer the despised enthusiasm of a few; but it is the firm conviction of the most intelligent and best informed among all classes of society. It is spreading (blessed be God) in all its hallowed realities, especially among the young. We must ever expect, that when there is so much blossom con-



tinually turning into real fruit, there must be much which displays great promise that drops off at the first cool wind that blows, and is heard of no more. There is not so much danger in this our day of falling away through persecution for the truth's sake, as there is of hastily assuming the garb of piety to serve some worldly purpose. To be able to speak upon religious subjects, to extol some popular preacher, to prefer the doctrines of Christ crucified to a dry code of formality, is no longer a reproach, but rather a commendation: and the consequence is, that our hearers of this day resemble those in the days of Ezekiel: "Thou art unto us as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument." They hear the word, but they will not do it.

Brethren, I ask again (for self-application is the object I am aiming at), are you pleased with what you hear? Are your feelings often moved at that which is addressed to you? Are your hopes and desires kindled by the rich consolations of the Gospel? And yet, is your religion bending and accommodating itself to the customs of the world? Are you religious in one society, talking the language of Canaan; and, if not profane in others, at least, as worldly-minded as those around you—triflers, slanderers, scorers, despisers of that which is good? Is it thus with you? Then I tell you that the Gospel preaching, to which you say you are attached, so far from benefiting you, will prove your heaviest curse. The ministry of the Gospel will never be in vain. The same sermon which, under God, subdues the pride, and rebellion, and prejudice of some, will only harden others in impenitence and in unbelief. Therefore take heed how you hear; for it had been better not to have known the way of righteousness, than, having known it, to turn aside into your own courses. O, endeavour by self-examination, by prayer, by closer communion with God, to attain a greater depth of soil, to strike a deeper root upon the Rock of ages. Then, when all the storms of temptation shall beat at your feet, you shall be preserved, and you shall flourish when all the cedars of Lebanon shall be uprooted for ever.

The next order of hearers is thus described by our Lord: "That which *fell among thorns* are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." These differ from the others in this respect: the first had no root at all, and it was carried away as soon as it was sown: in the second the soil was so thin, and the plant so feeble, that it died before it had grown up. The Word of God makes a lodgment in the heart for a time; it is carried out of this house; it outlives the Sabbath; but, alas! it does not outlive the week. What then are the things that choke it? The cares, and the riches, and the pleasures of the world: if you are men of business, the cares; if you are men of property, the riches; if you are men of idleness, the pleasures. My brethren, there is no more deadly enemy to profitable hearing of God's word than a worldly spirit: "Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." Many there are of whom it may be truly said, that they "have forsaken the right way, and have gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighte-

ousness " O that I could convince such—or I would rather say, O that the Holy Spirit of God might convince them, that there is a day coming, when those gilded baubles, upon which you are expending you time, your strength, your energy, will no more be able to profit you. My brethren, the love of Christ and the love of the world cannot dwell in the same heart. If any man is a friend of the world, he must be an enemy of God. No fruit to perfection will that heart bring forth, which is choked with the cares and the pleasures of this life.

These, then, are three of the parties enumerated by our Lord ; and they are all seen to be *hearers only*. It is very plain, therefore, that our Lord did not expect his Gospel to produce universal conversion. " Many are called but few are chosen." There are comparatively but few who are willing to hear, and receive the truth in the love of it ; who pray fervently that the word of God may be ingrafted into their heart by the operation of the Holy Spirit and prayer. O, my brethren, that you may be filled with the seed of heaven, and believe to the saving of your souls.

The last class, upon which my comments must be brief, are thus described : ' That on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.' How affecting is the consideration, that out of four classes of hearers supposed in this parallel, three were deceived ! There are many ways, brethren, of going wrong ; there is but one way of going right. And what was it made the difference between these and the other description of persons ? It was this ; that the soil had been prepared, the fallow-ground broken up, the heart softened for the reception of this blessed seed by the Spirit of God. There was no prejudice ; but a honest heart, willing and disposed to listen, and meekly to receive the truth. This preparation of the heart is from the Lord ; it is his work, and his promise is, " A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." When this promise is fulfilled, the man is no longer a hearer only, but he begins to be a doer of the word : he keeps it, he evidences it, he treasures it up in his heart, and it becomes the daily rule of his life : it is a lamp to his feet, and a light to his path : it is his defence in the hour of temptation : " Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I should not sin against thee." He desires to hear and to read ; " How sweet are thy words to my mouth ; yea, sweeter than honey to my lips." The word of God in short is his joy, his comfort, his all. His religion is not a fanciful feeling, not a dead hearing, but a living principle. He brings forth fruit with patience, and with perseverance.

Brethren, let this be your aim. Be not weary in well-doing ; and in all your trials rest upon Christ, who, as he has been the author, will also be the finisher of your salvation. Be earnest in every duty for his Name's sake. Remember that the practical truth to be drawn from all that I have said to you this morning, is summed up in the language of the Apostle : " Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls." Or in the language of our Saviour,

“ Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” Let us then unite in humble prayer to Him who is the great and glorified Head of the Church, and with whom is the residue of the Spirit, in that most appropriate petition of our Church: “ That it may please thee to give to all thy people, increase of grace, to hear meekly thy word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. We beseech thee to hear us. good Lord.”

## THE JOY OF ANGELS IN THE SUCCESS OF REDEMPTION.

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REV. H. MELVILL, A.M.

SOMERS' CHAPEL, SOMERS' TOWN, MARCH 1, 1835\*.

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"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."—LUKE, xv. 10.

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It is equally true of Christianity that it cherishes and directs certain dispositions which it finds in our nature, and that it labours to introduce others which are not of native growth. This is remarkably explained in that double precept of St. Paul, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." The "weeping with them that weep" is, in a certain degree, natural to us; for, with rare exceptions, the sight of misery excites in men's hearts emotions of compassion. But the "rejoicing with them that rejoice," is so far from being natural to us, that envy, rather than delight, is the feeling which commonly follows the view of another's prosperity. Compassion is itself a natural, original, distinct, particular affection in human nature; whereas rejoicing in the joy of others is only a consequence of the general affection of love which results from an enlarged philanthropy; and this enlarged philanthropy can follow from nothing but the infused principle of Christianity; the religion whose every precept wages war with selfishness. It is the object of Christianity to make and substitute others, as it were, for ourselves—their interests for our own; and thus to cause that there should be only one heart throughout the human population. It therefore demands from us that we appropriate to ourselves the prosperity and distresses of others; having the same end of pleasure in the one, and of sorrow in the other, as we have in what is called our own portion. We admit that we here describe a point in Christian attainment which is never quite reached by the most advanced in godliness: but such is the standard; and we are to aim at perfection, however unable to acquire it; and while in neither respect we come up to the requirement, there will be always interposed a greater deficiency in regard to the rejoicing than in regard to the weeping with others; so that the former will demand the main of our carefulness.

Now, there is a beautiful exhibition in our text of that rejoicing in the welfare of another, which it was the one object of Christianity to introduce on the earth. It is asserted, you observe, that higher orders of intelligence have such sympathy with men, that the repentance of a single sinner ministers sensibly to their delight: they take an interest so intense in the great scheme of redemption, that they experience a new rapture at each instance of the salvation of the fallen: and you might have argued, from their taking such interest in redemption, that the

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\* For the benefit of the Northern Dispensary.



must themselves have a personal concern in its benefits. But without denying that, possibly, what Christ wrought out on our behalf may have had a beneficial influence on higher orders of being, we have no right to suppose that there was any race but the human whose necessities demanded so costly an interference. That the great sacrifice offered on this earth may, mingled with other consequences, have ministered to the permanency and steadfastness of those who never transgressed, we are ready to concede, or rather to maintain: but it were unwarrantable to suppose that this sacrifice was necessary for these unfallen creatures, seeing that the necessity sprang only from sin, and could not, so far as we know, exist where sin had not entered.

So that there is no reason for impugning the perfect disinterestedness of angels when rejoicing in the conversion of sinners. It was not their nature which the Son of God assumed; and it was not to redeem their brethren that he left his throne of light. Numbers, indeed, created like themselves, in the highest ranks of intelligence, had rebelled against their Maker, and were cast out from heaven in just judgment on apostacy: and had the Word been made flesh that he might bring back from ruin these magnificent, but now banished, spirits, we might have expected that as fast as he saw "the travail of his soul," there would have been the demonstration of great joy in heavenly places. But when the interference is on behalf of human kind, of a race dissociated from their own, and not so situated (we might have thought) as to draw forth their sympathies, that angels should evince satisfaction and delight at every proof of the success of redemption; indeed we say of this that it is one of the most touching exhibitions that can be easily conceived—how this main precept of Christianity should be obeyed, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

Now, there cannot be a fitter introduction to that appeal to your benevolence which we have undertaken to make, than the contemplation of the noblest creatures manifesting an interest the most acute in what befalls the meanest and the most wretched. The inference is too obvious to be overlooked, that, if angels thus sympathize with men, then ought men to sympathize with each other: and there is consequently attained a fine ground on which to press the claims of that admirable institution which this day solicits your support.

Now we waive for the present further reference to the charitable cause which we have undertaken to advocate; and we will confine ourselves to the illustration of those truths which seem involved in the assertion of our text. The great subject of discourse with which we have to engage you is, The joy which angels feel in the success of redemption. For we need scarcely observe, that the repentance demanded by the Gospel, and which ministers to the gladness of heavenly beings, is, the returning of sinners to God through the Mediator, Christ. And if you ask why angels should rejoice in the success of redemption, we reply generally, that redemption is the mightiest display of the divine attributes; and that, wrapt as angels are in admiration and adoration at their Maker, whatever sets forth his properties must be to them a fresh source of praise and ecstasy. Without doubt we must add to this general account, the affection which they entertain towards men as members of the family of creation, their consequent desire for their happiness, and their knowledge that happiness is secured by repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But probably the joy in question results mainly from the glory accruing to God, or from the manifestation which redemption puts forth of the attributes of Deity. And therefore, though we may afterwards glance at the feelings with which men are regarded by angels, we shall chiefly labour to show you how the scheme of our salvation was a new discovery of God to heavenly beings, and why therefore there should be joy in the presence of those beings whensoever a sinner takes hold of the obedience proffered in the Gospel.

Now, the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of God—under which all his other attributes are comprehended—these constitute the glorious majesty of our Creator; and of these, we are bold to affirm, our redemption is the noblest manifestation. If this be once proved, you will readily understand why angels rejoice over penitent sinners. Angels must be gladdened by every exhibition of the high prerogative of their Maker; and if redemption be signally such an exhibition, then redemption—as wrought out for all, or as applied to individuals—must signally minister to their joyousness.

Let us begin, then, with *wisdom*: and shall we hesitate to say of the scheme of our redemption, it was the mightiest exhibition ever put forth of this divine property? Here was a province of God's empire which had cast off its allegiance; a province on which he had shed profusely the rich and the beautiful; which he had given to creatures fashioned after his own image; on whose faculties there was no warp, and no bias, to lead them to sin; and on whom he imposed the gentlest terms as preparatory to an admission to still higher enjoyments. And when these creatures, in spite of every advantage thus liberally imparted, yielded at once to the suggestions of evil—when they hearkened readily to the insinuation of God's inveterate enemy, and so wrenched open the floodgates that a deluge of moral ruin overspread the earth; there seemed to remain nothing but final separation—nothing but that this globe, if still left to trace out her orbit, should trace it as a wrecked and despoiled thing, preaching to other stars the fearfulness of disobedience. And it was with the problem of restoring this earth without dishonouring its Maker, that finite wisdom, whatever its strength, was quite unable to cope: but Infinite Wisdom arranged a plan which made man's rescue not only consistent with the honour of God, but a source of the greatest revenue of glory. We are not indeed at liberty to exalt one attribute of the Most High at the expense of another: nay, these attributes, being all infinite and equally perfect, admit not of lines or figures of comparison. But nevertheless to us—and we believe also to angels—wisdom would appear most called into exercise when required, as it were, to undertake the guardianship of every other perfection. She must set herself to the task of preserving justice inviolate, holiness immaculate, and truth uncompromising; and yet allow the love of God to go forth to the succour of transgressors: so that whilst the remaining properties of Godhead might wrap themselves up each in its own dignities, and in its own claims, wisdom must be occupied in embracing them all within the sphere of her advice, manifesting herself by upholding the rest.

Let these several statements be considered, and what will you say of redemption, but that it overpoweringly manifested to angels the wisdom of their Maker? No sooner had the Godhead joined itself to the manhood, and the mystery which had for ages been hid in the Eternal Mind, and of which only shadowy notices had been vouchsafed to earthly creatures, broke forth, splendid with the corus-

cations of wisdom, than a thrill of gladness must have gone down the ranks of the celestial hierarchy. We marvel not that with one accord they should have sent forth such an anthem, that shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem caught its echo. And ever since, when redemption is brought home to the conscience and the heart, and the sinner repents, it must be the display of Wisdom by which they are especially moved. It is not so much the display of Love; for they have known from the first that infinite love induced God to plan redemption. It is not the display of Justice; for their own company must have computed the justice which could not pass by iniquity. It is not the display of Holiness; for it would have been to undeify Deity to suppose him capable of admitting the unclean into communion with himself. It must be the Wisdom which amazes and delights; "the manifold wisdom" which, according to St. Paul, "is now made known by the Church to principalities and powers in heavenly places:" "manifold," for it has removed every opposing obstacle; it has provided for every possible emergency; it has left no point neglected, either in the attributes of the Creator, or the necessities of the creature. This wisdom, manifested in that process of human rescue which is practically developed before them whensoever a lonely prodigal returns home to his father, must introduce new ecstasy through the angelic company; yea, must introduce, as it were, such a new epoch in the heavenly annals, as though there had been heretofore silence in the majestic temple of the skies, and no ascription of praise had proceeded from that throng which moves in the light of God's immediate presence. We might expect one rank to call to another, even as they did in the hearing of the amazed and almost terrified Isaiah,—angel to archangel, cherubim to seraphim, principality to power, to roll such a chorus of exultation, as might vindicate to the letter the assertion of the text, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

But if the manifestation of wisdom in the plan of redemption specially caused gladness to angels, we doubt not that a portion of this joy is produced by the manifestation of *power*. It shows omnipotence as much, at least, to create man the second time as the first. To rebuild what sin had thrown down, is as mighty an act as to speak it out of nothing: we should rather say mightier, if we dare speak of facilities in respect of Him with whom to will is to produce. It must have been easier to call the world into being than to purify it when corrupted. Nay, there is nothing presumptuous, but every thing scriptural in assertions of this kind. It cost God nothing to create a universe; "He spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast:" but it cost him the gift of his own Son (who shall measure it?) to redeem a single sinner. We know not how to express to you what we think of the power displayed in the work of our redemption. It is possible that this attribute of God is not so generally recognized as are others in the interference of Christ; but indeed there is none whose manifestation is more marked, or more wonderful. It is not merely that God entered into conflict with, and overcame, Satan: angels knew, and men knew, that the power of God was immeasurably greater than the power of Satan; and that therefore, if the two were antagonists there could not be doubt on which side would be the victory. But the amazing display of God's power is that of power over *himself*. This has been exhibited from the first moment of our apostacy. When penalty had been incurred, and God forebore to strike,

there was the grandest demonstration of omnipotence. If I were to figure to myself almightiness, creation is as nothing to me when compared with long-suffering. Worlds upon worlds, systems upon systems, a syllable peopling immensity, and causing the untravelled solitudes to teem with life—all this conveys to me no such august idea of omnipotence as God's bearing with sinners, and not striking down the rebellious ones. We say again, that long-suffering is God's power over himself; it is restraint on his own attributes: and that matter is at his disposal, this, we say, is nothing; and that spirit is at his disposal, this, we say, is nothing: but that he can be insulted and not take vengeance, defied and not crush, blasphemed and not annihilate—O this is the overwhelming truth; this is the being omnipotent enough to control omnipotence: and *myself*, in my constant offences, a living thing and yet a sinful—myself am a greater proof how mighty is the Lord, than the earth with its wonders, and the firmament with all its hosts. This, then, is the first respect in which God's power is displayed in the rescue of a single sinner. This rescue demanded the continued exercise of long-suffering, so that God should bear with the wickedness and ingratitude of men; and this long-suffering is omnipotence in its most wonderful shape—the strength of Deity put forth upon Deity itself.

But this is not the only respect in which redemption displays power. Redemption demanded the humiliation of God: and that God could *humble* himself—this was the same kind of demonstration of omnipotence, though we know not whether yet more surprising as that furnished by long-suffering. God could not make himself to be divine; he must necessarily be self-existent: and if he could not produce, neither could he destroy himself; it being just as contrary to the divine nature to suppose him ceasing, as beginning to be God. But that without ceasing to be God he should be able to “empty himself,” as is the strong language of the Scriptures—to circumscribe himself within a human body, to put off his glories by shrouding himself in matter—we say of this, that it was apparently such an approach towards the suspension, or even the cessation of Deity, it was drawing so close to the impossibility, that imagination can figure nothing that could more possess omnipotence. To cease to be God—this was the impossible; to remain God, and yet be found in the likeness of men—this was not the impossible; but till done, this was the inconceivable: it was stopping the pulse, and yet keeping the life—the giving that to be born which never had a beginning, and to die which never can have end. If we may use such an expression—there seemed to be in humility a natural unsuitableness to God: it becomes the created, but appears excluded by his very nature from the Uncreated. And, therefore, that God should have humbled himself—that He who was rich should for our sakes become poor—it is not merely nor mainly the condescension or the loving-kindness which is wonderful in this; it is the power. That divinity and humanity should coalesce to make a Mediator—I more recognize omnipotence in the fact of such combination, than in all the registers of might, whose letters are the mountains, and whose syllables are the stars.

And then, again, the power displayed throughout the application of redemption—displayed in the change of heart, in the renewal of nature, and finally in the quickening of the dust of saints, so that this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality; where shall we find the



parallel to this? Think you that within the circle of the universe there could be found at least such a display of omnipotence, that the child of a fallen race, doomed for transgression—the body perpetually to the grave, the soul perpetually to the rack—advanced, by the energies of the atonement, to greater likeness and closer affinity to God than belonged to creatures first in magnificence in the creation, and that magnificence never sullied by rebellion? And when you combine these several demonstrations of almightiness you must admit, that in the provision made for a single sinner, and appropriated by him when repenting, there is such a display of the power, as well as of the wisdom of God, as may naturally excite in angels emotions of great joy. There are undoubtedly thrown open to those lofty creatures, the material and spiritual creation; so that, free to expatiate over the works of God's hands, and to penetrate its wonders, they gather such ideas as are unattainable by ourselves, of Him to whom they refer all the architecture, and all the animation. But when Deity is before them, as he is in his dealings with the solitary prodigal, manifesting long-suffering, that power over himself which had not been shown when their own compeers transgressed (for with the fall of the angels came vengeance, and the rebellious were to be crushed); and when divinity is exhibited in humility, such might having been applied to the mightiest as brought him down from his inaccessible splendours, and made him of no reputation; and, yet further, when corruption will be eradicated from the corruptible, and graves resign their vast population, and death be swallowed up in victory, and an innumerable company of the people become kings and priests unto the living God, and all through the energies of that one work of mediation which is gathering home the solitary wanderer; O we think it must be as nothing to them, that they have traversed creation in its height, and length, and breadth, and found omnipotence at every step. Redemption is such a fresh unrivalled display of this love that, as though for the first time exulting in the discovery that nothing is too hard for the Lord, they may so triumph in its very success as to make good the saying, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

But you are to add to this, that in God's purposes towards men, as set forth in every instance of salvation, angels must find such proofs of divine *goodness* as they cannot gather from any other exhibition, that their Creator is a being of amazing benevolence, full of love towards the disobedient. Of this it is impossible that they should entertain any doubt: their own existence and their own enjoyments attest a principle in Deity leading him to desire and to design universal happiness. But take away human redemption, and they cannot behold mercy rejoicing against judgment: in the only instance, as far as we know, besides our own, in which creatures have thrown off their allegiance, love had seemed extinguished by apostacy, and made no attempt to mitigate the severity of justice. Angels might, therefore, have supposed, judging from what had happened in their own ranks of being, that to displease God was to lose, at once and for ever, all share in his mercy; they could have had no idea, until informed by God's dealings with man, that love was of a nature and a strength to triumph over unworthiness, and preserve its enjoyment in spite of the enmity of its object. It was not possible that such ideas could be gathered from any of the ordinary demonstrations of benevolence—from those exuberant and tender compassions which encircled, as they *knew*, the countless tribes that have done

nothing to alienate the divine favour. And until there had been disobedience, they could not determine whether love could bear with ingratitude: and when the disobedience came, and evil first entered the universe, the decision must have been, that ingratitude would have turned love into hatred: and therefore, when they find the divine compassion encompassing man in the midst of his rebellion, and see that love can subsist unimpaired when every thing has been done to alienate and to quench it; will you not allow that the goodness of the Almighty is displayed to them under an aspect of extraordinary beauty—an aspect which it does not wear when ministering to the wants of all ranks in the creation, and wonderfully providing that there shall be happiness wherever there is innocence throughout the universe? And shall we marvel that as they marked the dealings of God with sinners, and observed how he brings home the prodigal who has forsaken and despised him, they should seem emphatically to know him as infinitely benevolent, because commending his love by fixing it on an enemy? O then shall we marvel that all the company of heaven, learning, from the favour shewn to the returning wanderer, what divine mercy is, break into one expression of enraptured admiration, and thus prove, that there is joy in their presence over one sinner that repenteth?

You see, then, with how much truth it may be affirmed, that in regard equally to divine wisdom, mercy, and goodness, God's dealings with the sinner furnish such discoveries to angels, as quite account for that outbreaking of gladness which is mentioned in our text. We are sure, indeed, that much of the delight shown by those celestial beings, is to be traced to their deep and disinterested sympathy with men. But it consists with their lofty nature, that we should suppose their joy produced chiefly, by fresh and amazing disclosures of God's attributes; and a brief explanation suffices to shew, that redemption presents such disclosures, and may therefore be expected to cause the whole ocean of celestial bliss to swell into a fuller and more ample tide.

But we shall now consider our text as indicative of the feelings of angels towards our race; and thus complete the exposition of the cause of their joy. Let it be observed, that whatever the majesty and might of those multiform creatures which people the invisible world, they are always represented as taking an intense interest in the affairs of human kind; and as sympathizing most keenly and constantly with what is done and suffered on this globe. The statements of the Bible are such as lead us to regard our earth as centering in itself the watchful inspection of myriads of the heavenly host. So that illustrious creatures, who have never yet slighted love, congregate around the alienated tribes, and distinguished amongst those who come out from the mass of unrighteousness, are themselves instructed by the developments of redemption.

Without inquiring into the nature of angels, we know that they are ethereal things, altogether spiritual beings; and that God makes use of their instrumentality in carrying on many of his purposes. They are undoubtedly attendants on the righteous as they fight the good fight of faith; for St. Paul asks, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be the heirs of salvation?" And when Christ declares in regard to his followers, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven:" he seems to go beyond St. Paul. St. Paul asserts generally, that angels minister to the righteous; but Christ would appear to affirm, that *every*

righteous man has his own guardian angel. And if this be admitted, we may proceed quickly to a striking illustration of our text. We hold it most important, whether regard be had to orthodoxy of creed or integrity of practice, that we recognize in its breadth, the doctrine of spiritual influences. We are so accustomed to the being acted on through the machinery of the senses, and to receiving impressions from visible apparatus, that we grow indisposed to the belief, that beings who ply nothing of external engine, have access to our souls, and can give a bias to our thoughts. But, notwithstanding it is affirmed in Scripture, and not contradicted by our reason, that we are the subjects of a grand spiritual agency; and that creatures who elude altogether the grasp of our senses, around whose operations there is a silence unbroken by the faintest whisper, may have power to transfer themselves, as it were, into the chambers of our spirits, exerting over us a real, though most mysterious influence, whether for good or whether for evil. And when we have ascertained the fact, that angels do attend us through our pilgrimage, it seems like beginning an intimacy between ourselves and ministering spirits, that each should suppose himself specially under the 'guardianship of one or more of the celestial assembly. There is a greater resemblance to the associations of life, and therefore a closer appeal to the best sympathies of our nature, when we are told that each individual has his own ministering angel, engaging undividedly his watchfulness, than when informed that we share with the rest of our species, the good offices of a company of spirits. It is just like contracting the most intimate friendship, to say, that one angel separates himself from his joyous compeers, and attaches himself from infancy to some one of our alienated tribe. And if there be any motive to the avoiding sin and the pursuing holiness, in the remembrance that the eyes of illustrious beings, eager for our welfare, are ever upon us, assuredly such motive will derive great strength from the belief, that one of these beings attaches himself to us from our birth, with a sedulousness outdoing that of the best human affection, warding off many dangers, weaving many smiles, wiping away many tears, and that so far as accessible to grief, we shall cause him deep grief, in return for all his exquisite carefulness, if we yield to the temptation, and walk counter to the commandment of our God. If one angel had indeed been to me as a guardian angel, accompanying me in all my wanderings, observing all my solitudes, taking an interest the most intense in whatever has a bearing on my happiness; O, if a glorious and radiant creature, far removed by an unmarred birth-right from alliance with sinfulness and misery, has thus attached himself with all that is devoted in friendship, to one so wayward and polluted as myself, shall I not pause, ere I reject with scorn and ingratitude his disinterested kindness, and do my best to drive from me by impenitence and impiety, a being, who acting with commission from God, has had no desire but to shield me from evil, and made no effort but to guide me to blessedness?

We cannot but think the words of our text, affirming as they do, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, derive great illustration from what we have now said of angelic guardianship. It may be that there is one amongst ourselves, who has been watched by his guardian spirit, through many years of obduracy and indifference. Often has that spirit throbbed with the hope, that the object of his anxiety would give ear to the messages of the Gospel; and often has he felt the bitterness of disappoint

ment, when the world has prevailed, and the transient conviction failed to be deepened into conversion. Often in the season of affliction has this guardian angel suggested the consolation of faith in the Mediator: often in the heyday of health and enjoyment, has he whispered the admonition, that this earth is not man's rest: but hitherto there has been nothing to reward all his watchfulness. And now, perhaps, the grey hairs are here and there to be seen, and symptoms of waning strength are every day more discernible, and the ministering spirit may be filled with the apprehension, that yet a little while and he must render up to fierce and antagonist spirits, the being whom, by all the excitements which can stir an immortal, he had striven to snatch from destruction, and consign to glory. O, if it be lawful to speak of melancholy, when we refer to those who never sinned, may we not believe that the guardian angel, as he sees the man approaching the grave, with all the burden of unforgiven offences, feels something of that deep and desolate sorrow, which would possess our own souls, if the object which had engaged all the warmth of our solitudes, went down visibly into the whirlpool, a shuddering thing, and a shattered, and a lost?

Now, if there is one in this assembly, who has carried it with a high hand against his Maker, and has thus grieved the guardian spirit, and almost made him to despair of any recompence for his care and watchfulness; if he will now hearken to the Gospel of reconciliation, if now—while gathering myself into the strength of an ambassador from God, I proclaim that the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost—he will confess the sin of his disloyalty, throw down the banner of rebellion, and accept deliverance thankfully through the blood of the Surety; who will hesitate to believe that emotions of rich gladness shall be instantly felt by the guardian angel; that this ministering spirit, bursting into ecstacy, will own himself a thousand fold compensated for his months and years of anxiety; and that myriads of the heavenly host, when instructed to “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep,” will share the happiness of their exulting compeer; so that the demonstration of rapture issuing from unnumbered voices, will bear witness to the truth of the saying, “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

But we cannot enlarge further on a topic so full of singular interest. We shall only recur to our introductory observations, and ask you whether angels may not be affirmed so to sympathize with men whilst sojourning on earth, that they “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep?” And shall angels have a fellow-feeling with men, and men be indifferent to the well-being one of another? Are not men rebuked by the example of angels, if they manifest no readiness to relieve the suffering, comfort the afflicted, succour the destitute? It is thus that our subject applies to any charitable cause which may solicit our support. “If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another,” is an apostolical argument: and parallel to this is that which may be drawn from our text: If angels take an intense interest in what befalls men, watching over their welfare, and ministering to their happiness, men ought also to be solicitous for each other, labouring to alleviate sorrow, and to disseminate peace.

It may indeed be that this argument is strongest when the cause which claims support is one which proposes as its object the spiritual prosperity of men, the turning sinners from the error of their ways. Yet in no case can it be without



force: Christ died for the bodies, as well as for the souls, of human kind; and therefore angels, we may believe, would rejoice in soothing the pains which flesh is heir to, as well as in averting woes which sin entails on the undying spirit: you therefore may be urged by the mercies and the sympathies of the heavenly host, to uphold an institution whose endeavour it is to mitigate the corporeal sufferings of the poorer parts of our population. A dispensary is one of the most necessary and effective charities which can be established in a thickly populated neighbourhood. We hold unreservedly, that, of all public charities, there is none which should more commend itself to the enlightened philanthropist. The evil of public charities commonly is, that they multiply the objects which they propose to relieve. It is thus with institutions which set themselves to grapple with sheer want: their practical working is, too often, that of offering a premium to pauperism. But if an asylum for want may create more objects, the same cannot be said of an asylum for sickness; and therefore we see no bounds which should be set to the establishment of dispensaries and hospitals, until the misery against which they erect themselves is fully and finally mastered.

We need only say of the Northern Dispensary, what I know may most truly be said, that through its working, a vast deal is done towards lessening the sum of human misery within the district which its operation embraces. But its resources are quite inadequate to the demands laid on it by the poor of this overgrown neighbourhood: they must be greatly, very greatly increased, before the institution can at all fairly meet the mass of wretchedness on the right hand and on the left. And it is just I should add, this is the first appeal made on behalf of the Northern Dispensary in this chapel; though at least two-thirds of the patients which receive the benefit of the institution reside within your immediate district. It is no fault of yours that you have not before been solicited for contributions; but certainly you are in arrears to this charitable cause; and I cannot doubt but that stating them is the procuring their discharge. Medical men have, with the greatest generosity, devoted themselves to the service of this dispensary, and set all of us an example in readiness to do good, which ought not to be without powerful effects.

We call upon you, then, to be liberal. It is the cause of the poor which we plead: so that, in asking you to be liberal, we only ask you to prove yourselves creatures that have hearts. You can picture to yourselves, better than I can describe to you, many a straw pallet—the dews of death mingling with the tears which affection sheds on the foreheads of its emaciated occupants: and you can imagine the fever-fire eating away the strength of the father of a family; or consumption throwing its brilliant mockery into the eye of the wife; or some one of the thousand complaints to which flesh is heir, causing the days of chafening to be days of pain, and the nights nights of anguish; and all the while poverty holding the household in its clutches, so that no attempt can be made towards procuring medical skill. And when you think that these are just the cases in which a dispensary interferes, could we account you Christians—could we account you *men*, if you turned away churlishly from the present appeal? But we are persuaded that you will not do this. You will feel that the eyes of angels are upon you, and that, though you may be niggard in your gifts, and escape the rebuke of your fellow-men, there is a register kept on high of every portion of

conduct: and disregard of the suffering shall be exposed and visited at that most awful of seasons, when every man shall be judged by his works. We therefore confidently leave the cause in your own hands.

We only desire that we could bring you all to swell the gladness of the angelic company: and then with what alacrity, and with what liberality, would this assembly, without a solitary exception, come forward to the relief of the destitute and afflicted! If all of you had been renewed—if there were not here some (perhaps many) on whose behalf no song of triumph hath been heard in heaven, we should know that we had before us an audience to whom it were enough to point out the duty to ensure its thorough fulfilment. If the love of Christ be in the heart, (and it must exist where there has been genuine repentance) the love of man will be displayed by the uniform practice. There are angels amongst us: they have marked our worshipping; they give heed to the effect of the preached word: and now they are just ready to spring from the earth, and hasten back to the presence of Jehovah. O, whilst their wings are still folded—whilst they are still intent on searching out God's wisdom as made known this day by the Church—shall not some one individual yield himself up a subject to Christ, and surrender his heart as a new trophy of redeeming love? These shining visitants, must they depart, and carry with them no particle of those stirring tidings which produce always vivid joy in heaven—tidings of repentance amongst those beings for whom the Redeemer wrestled, and agonized, and died? There are no tears in heaven: be it so: but when angels come down to earth, it may be they can almost fall into companionship with human sadness, and learn to weep. And where is the spectacle which shall wring this dew of sorrow from eyes which it was never meant to stain, if it was not the obstinate rejection of the Gospel, and careless trifling with a thing so inestimably precious as the soul?

Each of you best knows whether or no this spectacle is still presented by yourself: and therefore we again ask you, Shall there be disappointment to those ministering spirits which are verily amongst us this day? So far as this assembly is concerned, must heaven be silent, and no wave of delight sensibly go forth through its ten thousand times ten thousand ranks? Nay; for spirits of evil are amongst us, as well as spirits of good. Shall the obduracy, and indifference, and unconcernedness of this audience, increase the pleasure (O for a fitter word!)—the *pleasure* when putting to the rack, and fastening others to the torment-place—the *pleasure* of lost angels, who long for and plot your destruction? The spirits of good and the spirits of evil stand as antagonists awaiting your decision. Which will you side with? With the evil, who want you as companions in their fire and their chains; or with the good, who long to usher you into glory, and into blessedness? We pause now for your answer: we hear it in your silence. You would know the method of salvation, and you would know also the evidence that you seek God aright. As to the *method*: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” As to the *test* of your faith in Jesus: “By their fruits ye shall know them.” “By this”—let this be remembered—let this press on your minds, as you leave the church, and are solicited to be charitable—“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

## LONGING FOR SALVATION

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REV. J. CLAYTON, A.M.

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“I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord; and thy law is my delight.”—PSALM cxix. 174.

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THE predominant desire of the heart, my friends, is indicative of the real character of their subject. Does a man, for example, supremely wish for the honours, and for the emoluments, and for the distinctions of this world? We may then conclude that he is ambitious, and that he is covetous. Does a man principally set his heart upon sensual gratifications? We may infer that he is a voluptuary. So true is that saying of the wise and royal preacher—“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

Now, to apply this test to another, and to a more important topic than one which relates to the passing affairs of this fleeting world; how often do we meet with persons who address us in language like this: “How I wish that I knew whether I am truly converted to God or not.” I reply, What is your prevailing wish? Can you really adopt the language of David as your own? Can you say that it is the object of your impassioned desire, that you may see, and that you may enjoy, the great salvation of God? If so, then you may venture to draw a favourable inference; then you may conclude, that, at least, there is the dawn of grace, the first movement of the principle of grace within your heart. “Well, but”—perhaps the same individual, in the course of continued conversation, will say—“but is it not a fact, that many have desired salvation, and yet have not been truly born again? How shall we be able to judge, then, whether the desires of which we feel ourselves to be the subjects, are the mere operations of conscience, or what is termed legal conviction; or whether they are the effect of the incipient movements of divine grace in the soul?” Why, by looking at the holy tendency of these wishes and desires of the mind. If you only desire exemption from *condemnation*, only wish the *pardon* of your sins, but do not cherish an anxious solicitude that you may be delivered from its *power*; if you are only anxious that you may be justified, and have no sincere wish that you may be sanctified; then truly you are not sanctioned in concluding that your desires are proof of regeneration.

It is thus, my dear hearers, I apprehend, we contradistinguish the wish of the terrified legalist, and the genuine penitent, whose heart has been softened by the Spirit of the grace of God, and by deep conviction of the evil of sin. It is not enough for him that he feeleth he is justified; he wishes not forgiveness only, but he is solicitous to be conformed to that image, the image of God's dear Son, which believers are predestinated to. He desires that he may not only be rescued from the law, as a covenant of works and as a condemning verdict,

but that he may be assimilated and conformed to the law. "I have longed for thy salvation; but thy law is my delight."

In proceeding to meditate on these words, we shall endeavour, first, to describe the state of mind of which David was the subject; and, secondly, shall distinctly point out to you, the grand test by which you may judge of the integrity, as well as the ardour, of your religious desires.

First, we shall endeavour to describe, **THAT STATE OF MIND OF WHICH DAVID WAS THE SUBJECT.** "I have longed for thy salvation."

Now here is first presented to you *the object* of this desire. It is the salvation of God: a term which, you very well know, is taken in the sacred Scriptures in two senses. Sometimes it refers to mere temporal deliverance. Hence David frequently prays, in different parts of his Psalms, that God would deliver him from his enemies; that God would deliver him from his persecutors; out of the trouble and anguish that had taken hold upon him; together with several others that are found in various parts of this beautiful and devout composition. When David says, in this sense, "I have longed for thy salvation," he intimates, that all events, painful as well as pleasurable—all secondary causes, instruments, and agents, are under the immediate and direct control of God; that they are no other than his servants; that he can say to one, "Go," and he goeth; and to another, "Come," and he cometh; and that he is able to deliver the godly, who put their trust in him, out of every temptation and trial to which they are subject.

It also intimates something more, namely, that prayer is the grand means of obtaining relief under, and emancipation from, our trouble. For if we could deliver ourselves, there would then be no necessity under which we should be placed, of seeking deliverance from a higher power. Besides this, too, it acknowledges, that all deliverance comes from God. Salvation is *alone* from the Lord. Though he may employ this or the other agent, yet the blessing is the blessing which He bestows.

And then David, when he employs this word in this sense, suggests to us another very important consideration; it is this—that even an entire submission to the will of God, is compatible with fervent desires for the removal of our afflictions: of which we have many striking examples and illustrations in the Word of Truth; but none more fully to the purpose, than that which is exhibited to us in the person and in the procedure of Christ himself; who when he was called to drink the bitter cup, said, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me;" there was desire for deliverance; but here was perfect resignation—"Nevertheless, Father, not my will, but thine be done."

But I wish particularly to direct your thoughts to the term "salvation," in its higher, its supreme sense—the *deliverance of the soul from everlasting ruin, and its participation in the blessings of that salvation, which has been wrought out by the Redeemer for a lost and ruined world.* "I have longed for thy salvation:" a phraseology which at once implies the idea of loss, and of destruction. And we have lost the favour of God; we have lost the likeness of God; we have lost the well-founded hope of dwelling in his immediate presence for ever more. Hence, as we have just now read, Christ is said to have come "to seek and to save them that were lost."



This phraseology implies, that of all other benefits, none are of such great value as the salvation of the soul. It also shews, or is intended to shew, that we cannot save ourselves, neither is salvation to be hoped for from the hills or the mountains, or from the creature in any form which it can wear. "None can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him." It is "the grace of God" alone that "brings salvation."

Then in what does this salvation consist? It consists in emancipation from the curse of the law, deliverance from the anger of God. It is a salvation with the possession of the blessings of forgiveness, of renewal, of progressive sanctification, of preparation for the joys in the immediate presence of God and of the Lamb. It is a salvation to which no other deliverance can possibly be compared. For, my dear hearers, of what avail if we are sick, and are restored to health; of what avail if we are in poverty, and are raised to riches; of what avail if we are in degradation, and are elevated to honour; of what avail if we are placed in the possession of every thing that this world calls good or great, crowns and sceptres, and estates, the delights of the sons of men of all sorts—if our souls are not saved for eternity? The words of our Saviour thrill on our ears, in connexion with this part of our subject: "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

When the Scripture speaks to us, in the language before us, of longing for the salvation of God, it intimates, too, a conviction, that the individual who desires it cannot secure it for himself. No equivalent that we can offer to God can make him amends for the dishonour we have shewn to his perfections, or can repair the breaches that we have made in his law. If it were possible that you and I could present on the altar of God, hecatombs of oxen and sheep, the blood of which should be acknowledged as a sacrifice for sin; if we could pour out, as a libation, rivers of oil; if it were possible that we were sanctioned in offering the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul; all would be of no avail: for even were it a fact that it might atone for our sins which we still continue to commit, what is to repair those previous breaches which we made in the law which is holy, just, and good, in the antecedent period of our lives!

This leads me, then, next, to look at the *subject* of this desire. Who says, "I have longed for thy salvation." Who was it employed these words? It was David. And who was David? He was a man who was raised from an obscure station, to become king in Israel. He was a man so renowned in his exploits, covering himself, in a worldly sense, with glory, that the populace shouted as he went along, "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands." He was a man who had cultivated his mind; he became one of the first literary characters in Israel. He became a poet; his poems were set to music; they were chaunted in the temple worship. He was a man who had so enriched himself with the spoils of surrounding countries, into which he had pushed his conquests, that he had it in his power to indulge in the highest luxuries which a man can have; and that is, to be able to a very wide extent to dispense of his superfluities to relieve the poor, and to mitigate or remove the sorrows of the afflicted. And yet you will observe, this was the man who shews, that above and beyond all these things, there was something indispensably necessary to make him happy. Though he sat on the throne, and swayed the

sceptre over millions of persons whom he called his subjects; though he had armies at command; though he attained to the highest honour and opulence, yet said he, "Say unto my soul, O God thou art my salvation."

For this he "longed." Longing is a term which expresses intenseness of desire in the prayer which the individual prefers for the blessings he wishes to possess and enjoy. The watchman is said to *long*, when he is beaten by the fury of the night tempest, for the dawn of the morning. The mariner in the storm-tossed vessel, is said to *long* for the hushing of the winds, and the calming of the waves, and for the safe arrival of his vessel at the haven of rest. The husbandman, amidst the toil and the labour of the field, is said to *long* for the arrival of the appointed weeks of the abundant harvest. The prisoner is said to *long* for that moment when he shall have his fetters struck off, and he shall be let out from his dungeon to light, and the enjoyment of perfect liberty. And none but a convinced sinner, my dear hearers, none but a man who has felt sin to be his burden, and is the subject of an anxiety to be delivered from it—none but a penitent can tell what are the fervent and what are the intense desires, which often exist in the bosom for this salvation of God. It is discovered, sometimes, by the impassioned appeal: "What must I do to be saved?" It is discovered sometimes by the complete absorption of the mind in the object of desire; counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, that the soul may win him, and be found in him. It is discovered in the abstraction of the mind from almost every thing else, and its concentration upon this as the object of the supreme wish of the heart—"This is all my salvation, it is all my desire."

And more than this, he who longs for the salvation of God, will frequently make it the theme of his most earnest and importunate reflection. Day by day he will plead with God saying, "Heal me and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise." And he feels himself the subject of a willingness to sacrifice any thing, if he can but obtain this salvation; by a process, however mortifying to his reason and to his pride; by a process, however subjecting to his self-righteousness and high opinions of his own virtue; by a process which brings him into contact with the merits of another, and by which alone he is to be saved; and not by works of any righteousness which he can possibly perform; if, by any means, he may but attain to the resurrection of the dead, to the enjoyment of the hope that is full of immortality.

My dear hearers, the fact is, that there is every thing in this salvation which meets the case of the anxious sinner; and nothing else does. It is the adaptation of this salvation to his circumstances and his condition, which renders it so infinitely desirable; for it points him to One who is able to save, and willing to save, even to the uttermost, all that come to God by him. It points him to a righteousness which can cover all his deformities and sins, and render him acceptable before God. It points him to an atonement which can expiate his transgression and his guilt, however aggravated. It points him to a sacred stream that flows from the wounds of the Redeemer, when he hung upon the cross to bear the sins of mankind, which purifies and cleanses from all unrighteousness. It points him to a fulness of grace adequate to every possible exigency of the divine life which may arise.

Did you mark the language which was employed by our Saviour in the nar-

rative which I read in the opening of our service, in two distinct addresses which were made to Zaccheus? He did not congratulate the individual who got up into the tree to look at him as he passed along, and whom he bid to come down to his house; he did not congratulate him because he was a man in authority, though he was in power; he did not congratulate him because he was a man of opulence, though it is said he was very rich; but he said "This day hath salvation come to thy house."

Once more on this part of our subject, we must also notice the *extent* of this desire. Perhaps it may have already struck you, that it is not here expressed by one who is just in the noviciate of his religious course; on whose mind the light of truth had only begun to open; and with whose piety it was but as the day of small things. We cannot indeed ascertain what was the precise age which David bore when he penned this psalm: but it is evident he had been some time in the sacred school, and that he had acquired proficiency there; for he tells us, he had become "wiser than all his teachers," through the knowledge of the testimonies of God which he had acquired; and he speaks of the practice of it, as one experienced in vital godliness. And yet, this was the man, whom you will observe, is anxious still after the salvation of God: intimating to you and me this much, my dear hearers, that when we have begun to taste and enjoy this salvation, we become the subjects of more earnest desires to enter more fully into the paths of submission, and the fruition of its invaluable blessings and results. We want to know more of truth, that it may dwell richly in our understandings, in all wisdom and knowledge. We want to feel more of its power; we want to taste more of its goodness; we want to live more under its influence. Moses was not a novice, far from it, when he said, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory:" he had seen a glimpse of it before, and that made him anxious to behold more of its brighter displays. Paul was not a novice—far from it—when he said, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." The Christians to whom he wrote were not novices, whom he charged to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Nor was David when he said, "Give me understanding that I may live: I am a stranger in the earth; hide not thy commandment from me." And here again, "My eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the words of thy righteousness: I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies."

In fact, he who possesses this salvation, who has known something of its emphasis, and who has enjoyed something of its privileges, is desirous that his entire character may be brought under its influence. He wishes practically, as well as speculatively (that is, doctrinally and experimentally) to know it, that he may press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling which is in Christ Jesus; that he may be steadily advancing towards the perfection of this salvation described by the Apostle, "the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls:" because it is one which not only relates to the present, but it also respects the future: it is a salvation which relates to another world, a world of eternal glory: a salvation which respects this body, which is to be raised up from the darkness and ignominy of the grave, and fashioned like to the glorious body of Christ; completely delivered from all those sources of evil which now exist—its weakness, its tendency to decay and mortality. It is a salvation when

respects the will in all its faculties—their expansion, their perfect exercise ; and the emancipation of all our powers from darkness, from pollution, from disorder, from inquietude, and despair.

So that we come to this conclusion, as we pass on to the next part of our theme ; that is one strong evidence of our having become partakers of this salvation, when the longer we live, as years roll on, and the nearer we get to our grave, the more intense becomes our longings after the enjoyment of this salvation ; when we can feel as he who said, “ I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better ;” when as the outward man perisheth, the inward man is renewed day by day. Said the expiring patriarch, “ I wait for thy salvation, O Lord :” and happy he who knows that frame of mind, that when the Saviour says, “ Behold I come quickly,” is able to reply, “ Amen, even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.”

Pass we, then, secondly, to notice **THE GRAND TEST, BY WHICH WE MAY JUDGE OF THE INTEGRITY OF THIS ARDENT DESIRE WHICH IS HERE EXPRESSED.** It is found in these words—“ Thy law is my delight.”

My dear hearers, there is not a greater libel upon the Bible, or upon the Gospel, or Christianity, than this, that it tends to licentiousness. We do not mean to say that there are not those who have abused the privileges of the Gospel, as well as its doctrines, and who have “ held the truth in unrighteousness.” And we may just remark in passing, that, in proportion to the excellence of things, so they are liable to the greatest dishonour. But as you would not say it was the design of God in giving you your daily provision and repast, that you were to be gluttonous and drunken ; so you will not imagine, that if God abounds towards you in all the riches of his grace, it is that you may say, “ Let us sin, that grace may abound.”

There is no one view, in fact, which you can take of this salvation, in which it does not appear favourable to sanctity. Take it in connexion with the everlasting purpose of God : he has chosen us, “ that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” Look at it in connexion with the mediation of the Saviour : he “ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Or view it in association with the influence of the Divine Spirit. What is the office of that Spirit ? To enlighten, and to free the understanding from error. What is the office of that Spirit ? To convince of sin ; and the individual becomes penitent for it ; and penitence is the alienation of the soul from sin, the turning from it unto God, with full purpose of heart, with endeavours after new obedience. What, I say, is the office of the Spirit ? It is to renew ; in other words, to impress upon the soul the moral image of God : it is to sanctify ; to carry on the work till it shall be perfected in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. Or, if you analyze the effects of his operation, and say, that he is the Author of all the graces which form the character of the Christian, mark the influence of his distinct graces. Faith, if it is not dead, purifies the heart, works by love, and is productive of holiness. Precisely the same with love : “ If ye love me keep my commandments.” Exactly the same with hope : “ He that hath this hope in him purifies himself as Christ the Lord is pure.” So that looking at this salvation in what aspect you please, you come to this conclusion—“ The



grace of God which bringeth salvation, teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

Let us fix our thoughts, for a moment, on the expression immediately before us: "Thy law is my delight," and here follow my observations with attention.

By the "law" of God, we are to understand his holy word, which comes to us with the authority of law: it requires our obedience as a law. It is, like a law, the standard of our faith, and also the regulator and rule of our practice. David, doubtless, in speaking of the law of God, might include the ceremonial law; but this, being but "a shadow of good things to come," has passed away: and therefore he principally alludes here to the moral law. He frequently desires that he may be able to keep it: he says, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." "O how I love thy law, it is my meditation day and night." Language similar to which, you find in the epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, where he echoes the sentiment with a similar feeling: "I delight in the law of God, after the inward man."

In fact, my dear hearers, there is every thing in the law of God to awaken reverence and affection towards it, in connexion with this salvation. The law of God presents us with the first and most beautiful exhibition of God's moral character and his attributes. The law of God, by its types and shadows, directs us to the grand remedial means—the great propitiation which was to take away the sin of the world. The law of God, considering it as embracing the whole lively oracles, points us to the Saviour, Christ the Lord. The law of the Lord says, that those who come to him, he will in no wise cast out. There is every thing therefore in the Word of God, and in the Gospel of our salvation, to awaken our reverence, our admiration, and our most affectionate desire.

This delight in the law of God, of which the Psalmist speaks, being of a spiritual character, its effects, you observe, must be precisely the same. But it is not an animal delight, which leaves the subject of it to find it in carnal things. It is not a merely intellectual delight, so that the individual might be content to examine it, and to approve the theory, while his heart will remain under the power of sin. No; it is a delight of a holy order; it restrains the mind of its subject from moral evil in all its various forms, and brings its subjects into resemblance to that Saviour who says, "Thy law, O God, is within my heart; I delight to do thy will."

Moreover, this conformity to the law is an actual earnest of that salvation which the believer earnestly desires: for he wishes to possess and to enjoy the full, the complete salvation of God. The two parts of it are exhibited to view in that promise, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more:" that is one part; and another is, "I will write my laws in their inmost part; I will put my Spirit within them, and they shall walk in my commandments always, to keep them." O yes, the individual who has found forgiveness, is the individual who cannot be content without being made holy; he feels that this is necessary, not to his security merely, but necessary to his happiness, and to his entrance into glory, and the enjoyment of it; for "without holiness no man can see the Lord."

It is this, too, which characterizes, or distinguishes, rather, the obedience of the genuine believer from that of the servile slave. The latter may perform

many duties from a fear of punishment, from the dread of the lash, from an apprehension that he shall suffer or smart beneath the displeasure of his Master : and therefore his obedience, if obedience it can be called, is a mere task ; it is an obedience which is almost intolerable for him. But he who knows something of this inward delight, he it is whose obedience is cheerful. He takes pleasure in complying with the demands of his heavenly Father. In proportion as he is conformed to the law, his pleasure heightens ; and that satisfaction heightens still where there is a correspondence between the internal assimilation of his mind to the law, and the external fulfilment of its commands. It is this joy of the Lord which he shares that quickens his obedience, and prompts him to progress : “ I will run in the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.”

It is this holy pleasure which tends to draw its subjects from all inferior satisfactions. He who has the fountain feels that he could do without the stream. Crowns, and kingdoms, and sceptres, and all the insignia, and all the luxury, and all the splendour of the princes, and of the kings, and of the potentates of the earth, sink low indeed in his esteem, while he knows that joy with which the stranger cannot intermeddle, that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory.

Thus the soul becomes prepared for that state where the law of God will be performed to perfection : for here, alas ! there are many impediments to our compliance ; some from within—our corruptions ; some from without—the temptations of Satan. The hostile associations of the world in which we live ; our very cares and anxieties, which are connected with our legitimate relationships and businesses ; all these are so many hindrances. But in yonder world to which we aspire, where we shall possess to the full this great salvation of God, all these internal, and all these external, impediments will be completely removed. The soul is to be freed from sin ; every thing shall disappear that is tempting or enticing to evil. The services in which the beatified shall engage, shall be pure as those of the angels of light in heaven. Yes—

“ There to fulfil his sweet commands,  
Our speedy feet shall move ;  
No sin shall clog our winged zeal,  
Or cool our burning love.”

Well, then, my brethren and sisters, what are your desires ? Supposing you to put the prominent wishes of your hearts into language, would it be, “ Who will shew us any earthly good—the corn, the wine, or the oil ? ” Or would it be, “ Lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me ; and this shall put more gladness into my heart, than though I had abundance of earthly possessions ? ” If it be the former, call yourselves what you will, you are only worms of the earth ; you are parting with your heavenly privileges for a mess of pottage. And will you prefer death to life ? Will you prefer the treasures which the moth and rust corrupt, and which thieves break through and steal, to those which neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and which thieves can never alienate from your possession and your enjoyment ? “ No,” say you : “ we do wish to be saved.” Well, but *wishing* will not save you. Do you recollect what one of our own poets says—

“ Wishing, of all employments, is the *worst*--  
Wishing, the constant hectic of the fool !”

You must follow up the expression of your desires by a course of action, and the diligent use and employment of means. That is, you must study the Bible ; you must bend your knees in earnest prayer ; you must plead the promise with importunity :—“ A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh :” “ I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.” In short, you must follow up your wishes by a studious attendance upon the private means of grace, and upon the public ordinances of the Gospel ; or else you will find that all your wishes will be in vain.

Let me beseech you, then, to go, with earnest desires, at once to the Saviour : say to him, “ Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me :” and plead with him that he would put forth his mighty power, and prove to you that his name is Jesus, for he saves his people from their sins. For then, if your prayer has been heard, if your application has been successful, recollect that the salvation will reign *within* ; and bear in mind that the salvation will appear, too, in your steady pursuit of holiness *without*. You will bear more of the visible image of that God whom you reverence, in whom you confide, and whom you love : you will not be content with any thing like preparatory duty ; but you will be pressing onwards ; following on to know, and to love, and to serve the Lord. The tree being made good, the fruits will be good also—the fruits of righteousness, which will abound by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God. And in proportion as you are conformed to his holy law, in that degree you will enjoy something of incipient beatitude. “ O the blessednesses of the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord ! for in his law doth he meditate day and night. He shall be as a tree planted by the rivers of waters, which bringeth forth fruit in his season ; his leaf shall not wither ; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” May this be the case with you and me ! Amen.

## PAUL'S HUMILITY AND ZEAL A PATTERN FOR CHRISTIANS.

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REV. W. JAY.

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"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."—EPHESIANS, iii. 8.

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IT was foretold by the Psalmist, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power:" By nature they are aliens, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, as well as others: by conversion they become new creatures; they become at once subjects and friends: they mourn over their former indifference and rebellion, and, constrained by the love of Christ, they make it their chief care, and they esteem it their chief comfort, to live, not to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again.

We see this peculiarly exemplified in the case of our Apostle. The first time we meet with him in the sacred history, is at the stoning of Stephen: "The witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul." Had a person then said to him, "Ah Saul, you will by and by embrace the same cause, and die in defence of the same doctrine;" with what indignation would he have resented the reflection, exclaiming, "What, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" But in a journey of iniquity, breathing out threatenings against his disciples, the Saviour found him in his way to Damascus, and said, "Saul, Saul, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." At once his heart was changed, and the raven became the dove, and the lion a lamb. "Thou hast a mighty arm; strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand:" he falls to the ground; and, behold, he prayeth; and he rises and asks, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And he is baptized, and straitway preaches in the synagogue, that Jesus is the Christ; preaches the faith that once he destroyed: and all the churches glorified God in him. And years after this, when he came to review the scene, did he repent of this? Nay, he confirmed it; he enlarged it; he exulted in this experience, and could say, "yea doubtless, and I count"—not "*I counted*"—"I *count* all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them"—not "*did count* them," but "*do count* them"—"but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him." And as to his preaching of him, you have his language in the words of our text, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Let us observe four things:—what he says of himself; what he says of his office; what he says of his audience; and what he says of his subject.

First, let us observe what he says of HIMSELF. "I am less than the least of



all saints." However high religion may rise in the superstructure, it always lays the foundation very low, in the deepest self-abasement. And those of you who have passed through the process, well know that the day of conviction is a day of self-annihilation; the proud looks are humbled, and the lofty looks are laid low, and the Lord alone is exalted in that day. I believe, that if there be one word that will comprehend more than another the substance of genuine religion, it will be found to be "humility." For which reason, we presume, our great reformer, Luther, when he was asked, "What is the first step in religion?" replied, "Humility:" "What is the second?" he replied, "Humility:" "What is the third?" he replied, "Humility." And does not the language of the Apostle Peter correspond with this, when he says, "Be ye clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." As those boughs that have the most fruit bend the lowest, so the most eminent servants of God in all ages have entertained the meanest opinion of themselves. Abraham said, "I am but dust and ashes:" Jacob—"I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies:" Job—"Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee?" Isaiah—"Woe is me, for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips:" Peter—"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord:" John, the forerunner of the Saviour—"Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose."

We have *now* to do with Paul; and you observe that, notwithstanding the proficiency he had made in the divine life, he does not deem himself sinless. "When I would do good," says he, "evil is present with me; and how to perform that which is good I find not." "I have not attained; I am not already perfect." Distinguished and honoured as he had been, he does not behave himself unseemly; he does not think more highly of himself than he ought to think; he is not puffed up: "I am less," says he, "than the least of all saints." Bad grammar, but good divinity. The fact is, that his feelings were often too powerful for expression; his meaning is too big for common utterance: and in order to impress an appropriate impression, therefore, he would make use of old words, odd words, quaint words, cramped words; and would sometimes coin new ones; all unlike those who were afraid to express striking and memorable things on the behalf of the common people, who heard our Saviour gladly, lest they should be considered coarse and vulgar.

A few words, however, will be here necessary, by way of elucidation, or rather qualification.

I hope, in the first place, you will not consider this character of Paul as the offspring of falsehood and affectation. Christians have often been ridiculed for depreciating themselves. There is, God knows, a great deal of despicable cant among many professors of religion: they indulge in very debasing language concerning themselves, not one word of which do they believe; as appears from their tempers and their carriage: for no persons are found so sensitive and resentful when their reputation is touched. The case is this: where *shew* is a substitute for *reality*, it is always excessive. Actors always surpass the original characters. Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. Some people angle for praise with the bait of humility; I hope *you* will never be caught by it. They condemn themselves, hoping that you will contradict them, and commend them: I hope *you* never will, but join them in running them down. It is better to err always on the safe side; it is better to say too little of our-

selves, always, than too much. Adams, in his "Private Thoughts," with that searchingness of spirit so peculiar to him, says, "O Lord, I want more humility. And why do I want it? To be noticed and admired for it. Ah, my God, I see that my humility is very little better than pride." Baxter observes, that he had always considered Judge Hale defective with regard to experimental religion; "But," says he, "the cause was, he had witnessed so much pretence and hypocrisy during the Commonwealth, that he rushed into the opposite extreme." Remember that Paul here speaks from his real views and feelings, when he says, "I am less than the least of all saints."

And you will observe also on what he fixes his eye in this comparative depreciation of himself. "I am less," says he, "than the least of all *saints*." "Saints" means "holy ones:" it is therefore of *holiness* of which he speaks; not of his condition, not of his natural talents, not of his learning, not of his knowledge; but of holiness. He does not say, "I am the least of all writers; the least of all scholars;" (this would have been falsehood and affectation in him;) but "I am less than the least of all holy ones." And the reason of this distinction is this—that all other qualities and excellences may be known in their subjects and in their effects; but not holiness. Holiness resides essentially within; and consists principally in the state of the heart, and the rectitude of our motives and principles. For a man is not the more or less holy, according to the actions he performs. These may be determined by opportunities, by occasions, by means. These may be performed without any love to God in the performer; they may be done even from an improper aim: it is possible for a natural man to surpass a real Christian in many things that are materially good. But a man is more or less holy as his *heart* is right with God, and as his motives and principles are pure and heavenly. And how do you know what is in the heart of another? How do you know the degree of his motives and principles? If your conduct is better than his, his motives and principles may be superior to yours; and therefore, in the view of God, he may have more of moral and spiritual excellence. It is thus you are to understand the admonition of the Apostle to the Philippians, when he says, "Let each esteem other better than himself." The maxim will not apply universally: to use it in some cases would be folly. It would be absurdity, not humility, for a strong and healthy man to esteem a weak, sick one, as more able to do many things than himself; or for a wealthy man to suppose that a poor man is richer than himself; or a scholar to suppose that an illiterate man is wiser than himself. But it is otherwise with regard to holiness: *there* you never should presume in your own favour; never suppose that another exercises less self-denial or conscientiousness than yourselves. He may have imperfections; but those imperfections may have extenuations which may not attach to *your* deficiencies. He may not have had your light, your advantages; he may have had a thousand difficulties to struggle with, from which you have been free. In a word, you only see the actions of another; whereas you may feed upon your own motives and principles. You can only see the outside of another, and very little of this too: whereas you can look into your own heart: and you have never looked into it with the purpose, or in the light of the convincing Spirit of God, unless you have seen more wickedness there than ever you saw in the life of any fellow-creature upon earth. "For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murder, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, las-

civiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness;" all these evil things come from within (but they could not come from within, unless they *were* there;) "and defile the man."

Secondly, observe what he says of his OFFICE. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, *that I should preach.*" Augustine calls Paul "the herald of grace." He well deserves the name: he is always magnifying it; never loses sight of it for a moment. He connects it, you see, with every thing. He connects it with his conversion: "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ* was exceeding abundant to me-ward." He connects it with his conversation in the world: "Not by fleshly wisdom, but by *the grace of God* we have our conversation in the world." He connects it with his unparalleled exertions: "I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but *the grace of God* which was with me." He connects it with his functions: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this *grace* given." As if he had said, "This honour has been conferred on me, I have been invested with this office; not for any excellence in me, I did nothing to deserve it—yea, burned with nothing but hatred against it, and compelled men to blaspheme: O what but grace, grace the most free and sovereign, could—not only have *pardoned* me, but *employed* me, and made me the messenger of his heart's compassion, to go forth and announce to the perishing human race, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' " What grace is there here! What do princes when they want ministers; or masters when they want servants? They will be sure to take those who seem the most meritorious, and who already possess the qualities and excellences they require in them. Why? Because if they have them not, they cannot impart them. God can; and therefore, in calling his servants he also qualifies them: and therefore frequently takes the most unsuitable and the most inadequate, in order to shew that the excellency of the power is of God, and not of man. Man *needs* instruments; God does not: it is true he *employs* them; but never from weakness—always from wisdom, and from kindness. Men *depend* upon their instruments: God's instruments depend upon *him* for every purpose, and in every work.

When the Apostle says, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given," he shews the estimation in which he held the work in which he was engaged. And, my brethren, though the ministry has been degraded, and rendered despicable, by many who have been attached to it; yet in itself the **work** is honourable, and glorious; and they who properly discharge it, as the Apostle says, ought to be "highly esteemed in love, for their work's sake." They are the ambassadors of God; they are stewards of the mysteries of Christ: under the agency of the Holy Ghost they turn men from the error of their ways, and save souls from death, and hide a multitude of sins, and build up believers in their most holy faith. Paul would rather have filled a pulpit than a throne; he would rather have been appointed to blow the trumpet of the gospel, than have been ordained to blow the trumpet of judgment at the last day. "God," says an old Scotch writer, "had but one only begotten Son, and he made a preacher of him." And the Apostle says, he "came and preached peace to them that were afar off, and unto them that were nigh."

"O yes," you say, "an apostle was indeed an extraordinary character; he was in the church secondary only to the Son of God himself: he possessed

much of his authority and power: he could often discern spirits; he could heal the sick; he could raise the dead with a word; he could draw back the veil of futurity, and foretell things to come." Very true; but the Apostle does not value his office because of *these*; he does not esteem it so highly because of the miraculous gifts and endowments, but because of the *preaching* part: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given"—not "that I should speak with other tongues, and do wonders"—but "that I should *preach* among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." And therefore, however distinguishable our ministry may be from the apostolical office, there is no difference as to the *nature* and the *design* of it. No; what God said to Paul he says to every minister now that he commissions: "I send thee to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me." And therefore the real ministers of the Gospel now, though destitute of their extraordinary endowments, yet can say with Paul and his companions, "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

I wish to render this part of my subject useful and interesting, not only to ministers—very few of whom I have before me—but to Christians at large—of whom I have so many before me in the presence of God this evening. I wish you therefore to remember this, (now carry it away with you,) that whatever you are enabled to do for the Lord dignifies you; that as far as you serve him you reign. David was a hero, and a conqueror, and a monarch; but he preferred the temple portal to the condition of any heathen monarch. He could say, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness." "O," says he, "what a privilege, to open the doors, and let people in to see his power and glory in the sanctuary! What a privilege, to admit persons to come in and see the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple!"

God does not communicate the same favour to all, nor in the same degree: he is a sovereign, and has a right to do what he will with his own. To some he gives more; to some less: some he places in splendid stations, others are called to pass their days in obscurity. But did you never observe the language of the Apostle: "To every one is given grace, according to the gift of Christ." There is a variety in all his works. If you look up you will see one star differing from another star in glory: if you survey the earth you will find hills and valleys: if you observe the natural body, there is a diversity of parts, and they are very unequal; yet no one of them is needless or useless. It is the same in the mystical body; there are many offices, but all cannot fill the same office. "If all were the hearing where was the smelling?" "But now," says the Apostle, "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you." Hear therefore the language of the Apostle to the Romans: "Having then," says he, "gifts differing according to the grace"—(now mind this phrase again)—"according to *the grace* that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation. For as we have many members, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one



body in Christ, and every one members one of another." So the Apostle Peter says to the Christians scattered abroad: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." *Grace* again—*manifold* grace. "If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ." *To you* is *this* grace given—that you should teach that poor child to read his Bible. *To you* is *this* grace given—to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. *To you* is *this* grace given—to subscribe to the Bible Society, the Missionary Society, the Tract Society. And *to you* is *this* grace given—to collect for them. Thus you see, all may be graciously employed and honoured. And Newton, when he says, that at God's bidding some fly over earth and seas, adds finely, "They also serve thy will; and they require more grace who wait than those who fly." Yes; "Unto you it is given," says the Apostle, (mark the language again) "in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."

Here is an honour often conferred upon Christians; for nothing strikes like a fact: I believe nothing is ever so impressive as the display and the exercise of the passive graces in the believer. God therefore gives his people the grace of being placed in a state of affliction, in order that they may become his witnesses—that they may be examples, to display to others the truth of the excellency and efficacy of the religion of the Gospel; and they are often enabled peculiarly to glorify God in the fire. Sometimes when they are laid by through accident, or an affliction, or a disease, they are ready to think they are approaching a very useless part of their lives; they are led to conceive of it, as Job says, as being "made to possess months of vanity," during which they can do nothing for God or their generation; when I have known them in such circumstances to be approaching, as I verily believe, the most useful part of their lives; when they have been enabled to suffer as Christians; when their whole frame and character has been expressive of this language: "O Lord I mourn, but I do not murmur: I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant." What has been the effect of this? How useful has the impression been! And even where the Christian lives, perhaps, in a mud-wall cottage, stretched, it may be, on nothing better than a pallet of straw, where he is hardly observed by any of his fellow-creatures—how do we know but, by the manner in which he suffers there, he may excite even praise and thanksgiving in another world: for the Apostle tells us we lie open to it; we are "a spectacle to the world, to *angels*, and to men."

Thirdly, Let us observe what he says of his AUDIENCE. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the *Gentiles*:" not exclusively; but immediately, extensively, and peculiarly. And there is something remarkable and worthy of notice in this. When it pleased God, who separated him from his mother's womb, and called him by his grace, to reveal his Son in him, it was that he might preach him among the Gentiles; and he conferred immediately, not with flesh and blood. And you will observe that he preached the Gospel to the Gentiles long before he preached it to the Jews at all. Upon his conversion at Damascus he went into Arabia

for three years: then he went up indeed to Jerusalem, but staid only fifteen days, and saw none of the apostles but Peter and John the Lord's brother. Fourteen years after this he went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with him: and hear what he says: "I went up by revelation and communicated unto them that Gospel which I preached among the Gentiles; and when I saw," says he, "that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was committed unto Peter; for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles; and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right-hand of fellowship: that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision." And the Apostle, instead of complaining of this, rejoiced in it: "I am the Apostle of the Gentiles," says he; "I magnify mine office." The Jews in general, having been the peculiar people of God, were exceedingly jealous of the extension of their privileges to others. It was supposed in early ecclesiastical history, that for the announcement of this, Isaiah was sawn asunder. However that may be the Apostle tells us, that his announcement of it was an instance of great moral heroism: "Isaiah is very bold, and says, I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a people that was not called by my name."

You find that even the minds of our Lord's own immediate disciples were beclouded by this prejudice: and you will see that it required a miracle to deliver the mind of the Apostle Peter from this tendency. But it was otherwise with Paul, though a Jew from the very beginning. O what a noble soul had he! He never wished to monopolize any thing, but rejoiced in proportion as it became common and general: "Would God," said he before Agrippa, "that not only thou, but *all that hear me this day*, were not almost but altogether such as I am, except these bonds." When he tells Timothy that there was laid up for him a crown of righteousness, which the righteous judge would give him at that day; it delighted him to think, that his head would not sparkle *alone*, but that the heads of *others* would be equally adorned with the same crown: "And not to me only," says he, "but to *all them* also that love his appearing."

Now this was always designed to be the case from the beginning; that after a while the partition wall should be thrown down; and that the Gentiles should become heirs of the same body, and partakers of the promise of Christ by the Gospel. While without Christ, they had been strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and aliens from the covenant of promise. Living without hope and without God in the world, they had been enveloped in ignorance, darkness, idolatry, superstition, vice, and wretchedness. They all lie, as John expresses it, "in the devil:" "The whole world," says he, "lieth in wickedness"—the wicked one. But it was said, "In his name shall the Gentiles trust: to him shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious." Simeon was enabled to perceive this when he embraced the infant Messiah, and blessed God that he had seen his salvation which was "prepared before the face of all people a light to lighten the Gentiles;" as well as "the glory of his people Israel." The Jews had despised them: considering themselves *children*, they always called them *dogs*: viewing themselves as *citizens*, they considered them as only *out-*

*casts.* "But," says our Saviour, "go ye out into the highways and hedges, and bring in the poor, and the maimed, and the halt and the blind." What goodness was here!

"Let not conscience make you linger;  
Nor of fitness fondly dream."

Are you more unworthy than these Gentiles to whom were sent the unsearchable riches of Christ?

And here you see in the Apostle's case, *the nature of the Christian dispensation.* You will observe that the Christian dispensation did not properly commence till the death of Christ. Accordingly during his abode on earth he was the minister of the circumcision only. And when he sent forth the apostles and the seventy, he said, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles: and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But upon his resurrection from the dead, when this glorious economy had actually commenced, his language and his commission was conformable to it: then said he to them, "*Go into all the world*, and teach the Gospel to every creature: teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "And they went forth," we are told, "preaching every where that men should repent."

There is nothing, therefore, in the Christian dispensation like that of Judaism. Judaism was of divine original; but then it was exclusive; it was confined, and it was necessarily confined, to a particular nation. In the nature of the case it never could have become a universal religion. How could all the males in all the countries of the earth, have repaired three times a year to Jerusalem to appear before the Lord, and to worship there?

"But we have no such lengths to go,  
Nor wander far abroad;  
Where'er the saints assemble now,  
There is a house for God."

Christianity has no localities: our Saviour said to the woman, "The hour cometh, yea now is, when neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem (exclusively) shall men worship the Father; but all shall worship him in spirit and in truth." The Gospel therefore overlooks every thing that is external and adventitious in men's condition, and regards them as men only. Whatever be their colour, whatever their condition, whatever their country, whatever their character, it regards them in those exigencies which are common to every individual of the human race. It finds every individual guilty, and it brings forgiving mercy; it finds every individual depraved, and brings sanctifying grace. It finds every individual capable and destined to live for ever; and turns this, which would otherwise have been a curse, into a blessing, by converting it into light and immortality.

We observe also, that in this part of the subject *we* are peculiarly interested. Paul was the Apostle of the Gentiles; that is, he was *our* Apostle. We, you know, were once Gentiles, led away by dumb idols. What were your forefathers when Paul was called by grace? A number of painted, naked savages, shouting about here in the woods, and enslaved by the most absurd and cruel superstitions. At what time, and in what manner, the Gospel first came to the Gentiles here, we cannot accurately determine; but at an early period it came:

and it has continued, notwithstanding all our national privations, among us ever since : and it has had a series of finer and more glorious triumphs than in any country under heaven.

Lastly, observe what he says of his SUBJECT. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles *the unsearchable riches of Christ*:" the model after which all ministers should be conformed : all of us should be able to make use of the same language with them. They could say, "We preach not heathen virtues, not Jewish economies, not moral systems, not worldly politics, not church discipline, not the difference in forms and modes of worship : we have a nobler theme. We leave nature to the philosophers : *our* philosophy is to know "God manifest in the flesh." We leave the planets to astronomers : *our* astronomy is to teach people to adore "the bright and morning Star;" to adore "the Sun of Righteousness," rising with healing under his wings. We leave geometry to the mathematicians ; *our* geometry is to teach people "to comprehend with all saints, what is the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge:" our arithmetic, to teach men "so to number their days, as to apply their hearts unto wisdom." We leave criticism and language to the rhetoricians, concerned only to be skilled in the language of Canaan, and to speak according to the living oracles of God. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord:" "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness ; but to them which are called both Jew and Greek, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God." This is the bread of life, the life of the soul : and though there may be some that despise it, as the Jews of old despised the heavenly manna, calling it, "this light bread," yet this is the bread that satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness ; and every partaker of it, every one that has tasted that the Lord is gracious, will exclaim, "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

What are these unsearchable riches of Christ ? They do not intend so much his attributes and possessions as God, as his mediatorial resources and treasures. The whole dispensation of the Spirit is lodged in his hands : "For in him it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell"—pardon, peace, knowledge, strength, grace, and glory. There is an abundance of these riches in him ; they are unsearchable as they are found in him. The world has its riches, but they are easily comprehended : and Solomon summed them all up when he said, "Vanity of vanities ; vanity of vanities, saith the preacher ; all is vanity." All the wealth of the world, all the world calls good and great, is infinitely inferior to mind. I say, to *mind*. The riches of the Saviour are for the soul, and for eternity : they are therefore invisible, as to the senses ; and they are boundless too ; so that no creature in heaven or earth can ever fully explore them. Angels, it is true, desire to look into these things ; and will always be looking into them, but never see the bottom : how then is it to be supposed that any mortal can ever worthily imagine the value of that blood which cleanseth from all sin ; the perfection of that righteousness which can justify the ungodly, and give him a title to eternal life ; that peace which "passeth all understanding;" that joy which is "unspeakable and full of glory;" that love which "passeth knowledge;" that power that is able "to do for us exceedingly abundant, above all that we can ask or think?" Well may the Apostle call these, "*the unsearchable riches of Christ*."



And, to close, it should rejoice you to know, that He is in the possession of such unsearchable riches. It should gladden you to learn this on *his own account*; for he is infinitely worthy. And is there a Christian here this evening, whose heart does not exclaim,

" Let Him be crowned with majesty,  
Who bowed his head to death;  
And be his honour sounded high,  
By all things that have breath."

Christian, do not yet rejoice to think, that He, your dear Lord and Saviour, who was once so poor as not to have where to lay his head, has now dwelling in him "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" has in his possession, and at his disposal, all the treasures of nature and grace, and providence and glory?

And you should rejoice *in the behalf of others* too. When many rise in the world, and acquire resources, who is the better for them? Rather they oppress, and peel, and spoil, and curse. When many of your fellow-creatures gain wealth, they immediately hoard it: who is the better for it? How seldom do you find those who have large affluence, possessing the will to do good with it! But O let us rejoice that these unsearchable riches belong to One

" Whose heart is made of tenderness,  
Whose bowels melt with love."

Let us rejoice to think, therefore, that there are in him the resources of **pity**, the resources of grace.

*To you* is the word of this salvation sent. Do you value the preaching of it? Can any one of you imagine now, that these unsearchable riches are published among you from Sabbath to Sabbath, only to *amuse* you—only that you may give them a *hearing*? Is it *enough* to hear them? You *may* hear, and *believe*, and wonder, and *perish*. And if you derive no advantage from the dispensation, the dispensation itself will become a *curse*; and "the savour of life unto life" will be turned into "the savour of death unto death." Happy are those who are convinced of their spiritual need; who begin to be in want; who are sensible that they are unable to relieve their own exigences, and that creatures can never relieve them; and so be prepared to say with Newton,

" The help of men and angels joined  
Can never reach my case;  
Nor can I hope relief to gain,  
But in that boundless grace."

Tell this joy to Him, who has unsearchable riches, with confidence. Enlarge your desires and your hopes. Be not satisfied to obtain from him mere relief: the Apostle tells us, that such was the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, "that though he was rich, yet, for our sakes, he became poor, that we through his poverty"—might be relieved? No—but "that we through his poverty might be rich:" and therefore "ask and receive, that your joy may be full."

And, finally, how blessed are they who are one with their Saviour! You may judge of your safety by His safety—your honour by His honour—your wealth by His riches. All he hath is yours; for "he that hath the Son hath life." You may be poor in this world; but you are "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom;" you may have nothing, but you "possess all things." Amen.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS.

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TRINITY CHURCH, CHELSEA, MARCH 8, 1835.

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“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”—REVELATION, ii. 17.

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IN the last discourse we contemplated the Church of Christ during one of the most interesting periods that it has ever known, namely, during those peculiarly trying centuries when its members were poor in this world's advantages, but rich unto God: “I know thy poverty; but thou art rich.” They were to endure the ten days of tribulation under their pagan persecutors, and, being found faithful unto death, to wear the crown of life. This state of apparent depression, but of real prosperity, continued until the three first centuries had passed away, and the religion of the Redeemer began to emerge from its obscurity; to be patronised by the great and noble; to have princes among its proselytes, and Constantine, the Emperor of the Roman world, as its acknowledged head. As it too often is with individuals, so it is with the Church at large; the warm and sunny day draws out the vapours. Christians who in the preceding age had been able to rejoice in their poverty and tribulation, and even to be thankful at the time it was given—not only to believe, but also to suffer, for the name of Christ—now became anxious only for this world's wealth and advantages; so that instead of the holy, self-denying lives of the early converts, were to be seen the sensual habits of the mere worldling, in the garb, and under the title, of Christianity.

It is thus, then, that we believe the Church of Pergamos to have been the type and the representative of professing Christians; and the words addressed nominally to her were peculiarly appropriate to the great body of the Christian Church, from the days of Constantine until the period when the Popes first began to assume temporal power; and by their usurpation, enormities, and ungodly lives, gave (as we shall see in the next place) an entirely new character to the Christian world.

In our last discourse we remarked how peculiarly appropriate the preface was to the instruction and warning that were to follow. Observe the same beauty and propriety in the epistle which comes before us this day. “To the angel of the Church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath a sharp sword with two edges.” When our Lord was about to use only the language of commendation and encouragement, he refers only to those of his attributes from which encouragement and comfort could be deduced—his eternity and all-sufficiency. In his present Epistle, so full of reprehension, he describes

himself in his judicial character, as bearing not the sword in vain; equally ready to punish as to bless—to destroy as to save.

The Epistle thus continues: “I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is.” No sooner had imperial Rome become Christian, than from its great power and wealth, which were still considerable, it was at once the head of the Christian Church, and therefore might be termed pre-eminently a state of Christianity. To this depraved and profligate city evident allusion is made in the verse I have just read. Should this be thought by any a gratuitous assumption, and that it requires some evidence to prove that Satan’s seat and Imperial Rome were synonymous, we would refer you to the xii. 3, and xiii. 2, of the book from which our text is taken. You will discover without difficulty from those texts, that Satan’s seat was there where the dragon resided, who is described as having seven heads, and ten horns, and upon his heads seven crowns: in other words, Imperial Rome, built on seven hills; her territories not yet, as they afterwards were, divided into ten separate kingdoms.

It was thus that our Lord there beheld his true Church, dwelling in the very centre of iniquity, surrounded by those who were the very disciples of Satan—some who were in a state of open paganism—others nominally Christian; but without the love of God in their hearts; and many like the mixed multitude who accompanied the children of Israel out of Egypt, who had given in their adhesion, following in the wake of the camp, hoping to derive temporal advantage from their acquaintance with those who had the means of bestowing it.

Yet even there, in Rome itself, there were some who might indeed be called “the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; among whom they shone as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life;” and to whom therefore the Saviour could say, in the language of commendation, “Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days when Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.” As there is no mention made of any martyr of the name of Antipas, either in the Church of Pergamos, or during that church-state of which Pergamos was the type, it seems only to be mentioned as a general expression for the martyrs and confessors who had adorned the preceding church-state: and this is much corroborated by the name being entirely omitted in the Syriac and Arabic versions of the Bible. Our Lord’s declaration was, therefore, in effect, that they had passed through the era of the martyrs; and now, in the time of outward prosperity which had succeeded, the true Church, the invisible church of the Redeemer, was as firm, as faithful, as she had ever been; the gates of hell being as unable to prevail against her amidst the season of prosperity, as amidst the time of severest persecution.

It is well to mark the personal lesson we all may gather, either of reproof or encouragement, from such descriptions as these. Are there none amongst you who justify your coldness and deadness to the things of God, by the outward circumstances in which you are by Providence so peculiarly placed? none, the language of whose hearts is of this nature: “It is comparatively easy for some men to be religious: they dwell in a religious society; their friends are religious; their early habits are religious: every thing is favourable to them; they have little to distract their thoughts, to alienate their hearts from these high subjects. But for me, occupied as I am entirely in worldly business—dwelling amongst those who, like myself, are struggling to get forward in life—how can the same

degree of religious observance be looked for at my hands?" Or again: "Standing, as I do, in a higher and more prominent situation than others—surrounded by all the attractions of wealth, or luxury, or rank, it is impossible: God cannot, and will not, expect the same from all; he must make some allowance for peculiar positions in society, and peculiar temptations; and no doubt his mercy will prevail against his justice in cases such as mine."

Brethren, we beseech you, for God's sake, not to suffer yourselves to be deluded by this most common, but most successful fallacy. Rank, station, business, wealth, poverty, are extraneous and adventitious circumstances, which cannot be taken into account when you stand before the bar of God. The one inquiry then will be simply, Did you live to God, or to self—for the world to come, or for the world around you—during your probation-state while on earth? All others, all reference to past difficulties, all allowances for past peculiarities of rank and station, will be, and must be, excluded. The only distinction known to God will be, that which he himself laid down when he declared by the mouth of his prophet, that he would "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not;" there is no other distinction. Had it been otherwise, from your own reflection how could our Lord have so positively declared that the difficulties of the rich man's situation were incalculably increased by his riches? Hence it is evident that, if proportionate allowance accompanied these earthly distinctions, it would be impossible to show that the strait gate were straiter, or the narrow way narrower, or the kingdom of heaven more difficult of entrance, to the rich than to the poor.

The verse before us, however, is alone sufficient to show, that no such allowances will be made, because it proves that no such allowances will be needed. It is vain for any one to declare, "The worldliness of my friend, the vanity of my wife, the ungodliness of my husband, the thoughtlessness of my children, or, in general, my station in life, the character of those among whom I dwell, not my own inclination, have made me what I am." There is an absurdity on the face of such a plea when tendered to that Almighty Being who here declares that he had those who held fast his name, and never denied his faith, although they necessarily dwelt among sinners of so deep a die, that our Lord does not scruple to declare that the residence of this Church of the Redeemer was in the very seat of Satan himself. No, brethren; if you would really know yourselves, these excuses must be set aside, these disguises stripped off; and you must remember, it is not what you might have been, or under those imaginary circumstances would have been, that God considers you. He sees you simply as you are; and in the last great day, according to that shall you be sentenced. He who is coming to be your Judge well knoweth that the greatest abundance of wealth did not keep Abraham back from following God; that all the wisdom of the Egyptians did not encumber Moses in running the heavenly race; that even an earthly crown, and that a most anxious and disturbed one, did not prevent David from striving for, and obtaining, a crown of immortality and glory. How then can he reasonably be expected, in any after case, to make allowance in favour of the allurements of wealth, the temptations of intellect, or the hindrances of rank, station, or profession? Your fellow-men, we will agree, may, and ought, to make every allowance in judging of you; because, though they know their own temptations, they can know nothing of yours. **But expect nothing of this from God: he has confirmed both his promises and his**



threatenings; and has strengthened the one—the only way to the Father through the blood of Christ—by two immutable things, as the Apostle expresses it—by his *word*, and by his *oath*; and one jot, and one tittle shall never pass away from these till all be fulfilled. Seek God through Him who is “the way, the truth, and the life,” with a holy resolution to walk as he walks, to sacrifice every sin at his bidding; and you shall never ask in vain. Neglect this, and be assured that business, rank, station, poverty, are words that at the bar of God you will be unable to utter; and are excuses which, even if you had the audacity to plead, God would utterly despise.

We continue the epistle, that we may learn the manner in which our Lord addressed those members of his Church who were already deeply injured by a familiarity with worldly feelings and distinctions. “But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.”

The first charge here brought against the visible Church of the Redeemer is, that there were those in its fold, those who imitated the sin of Balak—namely, casting a stumbling-block in the way of God’s people; which we find from Numbers, xxxi. was the peculiar sin of that unhappy man. This, then, was the conduct which Christians, in those days of outward Church prosperity, were beginning to imitate. We know not that a greater or a better test can be offered of the spirituality of a Church, or of any individual member of it, than the feeling with which we view those points in our own conduct which may throw a stumbling-block in the way of our neighbours, or hinder the growth of divine grace in their hearts.

Consider this for a moment in the way of self-examination. Did you ever, in the whole course of your life, forego one apparent advantage, or deny yourself one pleasure, or abstain from any one action, from the sense that a contrary course would cast a stumbling-block in the path of some weak brother, who, from a morbid tenderness of conscience, fancies that to be evil which you in your stronger knowledge know to be good? How far is this from the very best of us! We know not where to look for it in our own lives and conversation. How very far from the religion of the Bible! How widely removed in all the best and higher feelings—namely, those of forbearance and love—from that holy and self-denying Apostle, who could unhesitatingly declare, “If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth.” That is, he would forego even one of the most natural enjoyments of life, rather than cast a stumbling-block in the way of some weak brother; whom too many Christians of the present day would have passed by in silent contempt; or, concerning whom, if they had been expostulated with, would have replied, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

We pass on to the glorious promise with which the epistle before us concludes.

Observe, first, my brethren, among these wonderful provisions for the conquering Christian, “*the hidden manna* :” probably a reference to that portion of the heavenly food which fed the Israelites for forty years in the wilderness, which was laid up, or “hidden” in the golden vessels in the tabernacle; as an everlasting memorial of God’s mercy, and as a very striking type of Him who declared, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven” In the

“hidden manna,” thus promised by our Lord, as the bread of life, for the support and nourishment of his conflicting and overcoming people, we discern simply the promise of himself, even that crucified Redeemer who said, “Whosoever eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day: for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.”

This is the food, brethren, without which, in the very midst of earthly abundance, your souls languish and die. If God’s Word be true, there is none other from whom you can draw nourishment and life; because “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you,” are his own words. Upon him, then, you must learn to feed daily and hourly. Upon the blood of the Lamb which is carried up to the mercy-seat, you must plead for pardon and peace. Upon the righteousness of the Lord you must plead your everlasting acceptance before the throne. Upon his grace and strength you must live all the day long: while amidst dangerous temptations, difficult duties, and painful dispensations, your language must be, like his of old, “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. In Him, and in Him alone, whom the world neither sees nor knows, have I the ‘hidden manna’—have I bread and wine.”

Again: the second promise of the text requires our attention: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a *white stone*.” Allusion is here obviously made to the ancient custom of judges in passing sentence. If it was intended to condemn the prisoner, the judge put a black stone into the urn; while they made use of a white stone when the prisoner was acquitted. The promise therefore, “I will give him a white stone,” signifies, “I will give him a full and free forgiveness of all his sins.”

How beautifully does each of these gracious promises grow, as it were, out of that which preceded it! First, Christ leads his people, by his Holy Spirit, to desire the *hidden manna*—to rely by faith upon himself. Then does he, through the efficacy of his cleansing blood, present them with the *white stone* of acquittal; blotting out as a thick cloud their transgressions, and as a cloud their sins.

Then are they prepared for the third, and the last, of the promises: “And in the stone a *new name* written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” “A new name,” marking his admittance into a new state of dignity and honour: just as Abram’s name became Abraham, and Jacob’s was changed to Israel, when the Lord entered into special covenant with them. So is it with the Christian. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the *sons of God*.” This is “the new name” which, in the case of every believer, marks his adoption into the family of God. And it is “known only to him that receiveth it;” which is obvious from this declaration of the Apostle—“Therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not.”

You will have observed, brethren, a peculiarity which runs through each of these great and blessed promises—namely, its *secrecy*. The “new name” is declared to be known only to him who has it. “The white stone” is silently dropped into the urn, and is appreciated only by him whose fate is decided by it. “The hidden manna” is concealed from all but those who feed upon it. Surely then some lesson may be taught us by so marked a peculiarity. We believe it to be this—that *the life of the true Christian is in all ages to be a hidden life*. Its *fruits*, indeed, visible to all, by holiness, and long-suffering,

and love, and every Christian grace ; but the life itself veiled in the transactions between God and the soul. As the Apostle to the Colossians expresses when he says, “ Your life is hid with Christ in God.”

Would you, then, know whether *your* life is the spiritual life of God’s dear children ? Mark, then, whether it possesses this essential qualification. Every other symptom of religion may be counterfeited by the mere moralist, or the hypocrite, or the formalist ; the hidden life of the Christian never can, for it is known only to Him who possesses it. Would you know whether this is *yours* ? Take this simple mode of determining it : subtract from life all the hours spent in necessary occupation, in outward religious observances, and in unnecessary idleness ; and then observe what remains ; see how much has been secretly dedicated to God : just by *so much* is yours the hidden life of the Christian.

How many in this assemblage, at this moment, are there, whose consciences I have already whispered to them—“ If this be, indeed, the stamp of vital religion, then does my religion forfeit all claim to it. When I have made these great deductions there is absolutely nothing : all is swallowed up in the engagements of time—nothing reserved for eternity. All, even of my Christian duties, are *spread before the world*—nothing “ *hid with Christ in God.*” Do you, then, never, in the privacy of your chamber, pour out your heart before the throne of grace—never feed upon “ the hidden manna,” as conveyed to you in God’s own Word ? Never dwell with delight, and thanksgiving, and praise, upon that “ new name” which can alone enable you to cry, “ Abba, father ?” Then, indeed, you have most fearful cause to question whether yours is the religion of the heart—the Christianity of the Bible—the offering that God will not despise.

Now, brethren, one word of encouragement to you, who find, upon self-examination, that these features of the true life of the Christian, are, at least in some degree, visible in your life. Yours is now a hidden life, possessing temptations and sorrows of which none partake, as well as joys with which a stranger intermeddleth not. The happiest portion of your day, though it may be a small portion, is spent in secret communion with Him whom, not having seen, you love. Known only to Him are those blessed sources from which you draw your happiness and your joy. It is *intended* that it should be so *now* : take comfort from this reflection—that this will not be *always* the case. The true Christian is, at present, like the diamond hidden in the bowels of the earth, known only to the Omniscient Being who placed it there. But in the day when the Lord shall make up his jewels, the true child of God, however low and humble, shall be, like that same diamond, cut and polished, and set in some fair coronet. Then will assembled worlds behold the men who meditated and prayed in secret, who were content to be as the dust of the earth : but then will they no longer be the Lord’s hidden ones, but shine like the stars in the kingdom of their Father, and swell the ranks of those glorified spirits who for ever shall attest the triumphs of the Lamb. Then will you, who are now feeding upon “ the hidden manna,” feast upon the tree of life. Then will the “ new name,” now known only to yourself, be declared by Him who gave it, when he confesses you, as he has promised, before the angels of God. Then will “ the white stone” of acquittal be acknowledged by the Great Judge of all the earth, who has now bestowed it ; and who will then, in full accordance with his promise, pronounce his sentence, and his blessing : “ Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

## THE CURE OF NAAMAN.

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REV. J. STRATTEN.

PADDINGTON CHAPEL, MARCH 15, 1835.

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“Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God : and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”—2 KINGS, v. 14.

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IN the Scriptures there are heights of divine light : God is light : and in those heights I hope ever to be permitted to expatiate : of that privilege no man shall debar me. In the Scriptures there are depths of divine darkness : and I hope often to dive into them ; and according to my opportunities and abilities, I will go down into those deep and transparent waters. In the Scriptures there are lengths and breadths of knowledge and information : and I hope to prosecute inquiries—to go up and down in the length and breadth of the land, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made me free : as long as I live I hope to know the delight and joy which are awakened in the mind by the acquisition of fresh knowledge and information.

You may sometimes think that the topics discoursed of are abstract, abstruse, and difficult : and if it were so, I would screen myself under the example of the apostle Paul, of whom the apostle Peter testifies that he did write some things which were hard to be understood. May it not, however be said of some in the way of reproof, “When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God ?” And are we not required to “go on unto perfection ?” Would you wish a public teacher of Christianity to confine himself for ever to fundamental verities ? Would you, in your theology, never proceed beyond the A B C ? I have no objection whatever at times to teach the A B C ; I will come down to the lowest capacity, and do my best for the least child in the assembly, for the weakest and slenderest lambs of the flock. But I must have my permission to do, at other times, as I have said. All that I have to offer you this morning, upon the instructive and interesting narrative which is before us, will be simple to every capacity ; and there is not a child now present, who will give me his attention, but may clearly comprehend what I purpose to advance.

In this narrative there are four parties concerned : first, the servants ; secondly, the Syrian soldier ; thirdly, the Lord’s prophet ; last of all, and greatest of all, the LORD himself.

Give me your attention first of all, to THE SERVANTS. The SYRIANS had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid ; and she waited on Naaman’s wife. The persons here referred to were freebooters, banditti ; persons who linked themselves together, and went



out upon marauding parties. Such things were very common in those countries, and in those times: they plundered and carried off, or destroyed, whatever they could lay their hands upon. It is this fact to which Solomon alludes when he gives admonition to Rehoboam his son: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent, without cause;" (which was just the case with these marauders) "let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: we shall find all precious substance; we shall fill our houses with spoil: cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse"—and afterwards divide the spoil: "my son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path."

These marauders had carried off, among other things, a little Israelitish maid. Had they killed the father and the mother? Had they exterminated the whole family? or did the father, and the mother, and the rest of the family escape? If they escaped and were alive, what agony, what inexpressible distress, when they thought of the condition of their daughter, of their little maid! There is no comparison between a child dead and a child lost. A son lost—a daughter lost, carried off by Syrian robbers, a captive, a slave, exposed to infamy, abuse, insult, vice, idolatry in its worst forms! But those who are absent from us, and of whose condition we have no knowledge, having received no intelligence, may be in a far better state than we believe. This little maid was secure and happy in the palace of Naaman. She sung sweetly there in the ineffable simplicity of nature; which is far better than the artificial wisdom and lessons of philosophy. She conformed herself to the necessities of her lot: there was no loud lament, no sobbing and crying about her kindred and her country; but she acquiesced in what the event incontestibly proved to be, the will and the providence of God.

And respecting her I wish to observe, that *she had been religiously educated*. She had heard of the prophet, and the perfections of the prophet's God. She knew that the religion of her country originated in the midst of miracles, and signs, and wonders, and was truly divine. She was well aware that there was light, and power, and efficiency in Hebrew principles; and that there was no good to be got in the dead and dumb idolatries of Rimmon. And, parents, here is a word to you. Teach your children the Scriptures. Let them learn the praises, and not the censures, of the prophets. Bring them up as Timothy was brought up, who from a child knew the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make any, both young and old, wise unto salvation. Let them be like this Israelitish girl, upon whom one delights to think; and their knowledge they may carry—nobody knows where. It will abide with them till their dying day; it may be transmitted to the ends of the earth; it may be made to touch the highest points of society; it may go down to the latest generations of the world.

I wish to observe respecting her also, *the prudence of her demeanour*; her good and excellent conduct. There was something remarkable about her, or she would not have filled this situation. She was lady's-maid to the wife of the highest military officer of the realm. And if she had talked to her mistress about her privileges, and filled the house with the noise and clamour of her religion, she had neither been respected nor regarded. Her light shone silently, and without a voice, and was its own recommendation. Her principles were to be seen in her amiableness, her submission, her dutifulness, her good disposition, her excellent behaviour. Had she been a *talker*, and not a *doer*, of the word,

the other servants had said, "Her noise, her nonsense, her folly! Cannot she hold her peace?" But there was that in her demeanour which softened prejudice, which overcame opposition, which secured her respect in the palace of the Syrian. And, be assured, there is ineffable enchantment in sprightliness, in activity, in willing duty, where these qualities open and beam in the young. And I look upon this Israelitish girl to have been a model in her station and in her sphere. Who can look on her without being prepared to pour out the benediction, and to say that she might have been the grace and the ornament of a loftier and a nobler rank? But she was where God had put her, and she was there a pattern.

I wish to notice also, *the tender interest which she felt in her master's welfare*. His health and happiness were what she felt concerned in; and so she said, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." Have you never met with people (I have with many) who did not care if the world were in a conflagration, provided their own nest was not in a blaze. Let us learn to seek each other's good; and especially in homes and houses look after the common interest and general welfare; and in the general joy and peace, you shall find your personal satisfaction. And be assured of this—that dignity and honour depend, not upon the *place*, but upon the *person*. It is not *where* you are, but *what* you are—as this Israelitish maid demonstrates.

Here is another set of servants: I wish to call your attention for a moment to *those who accompanied Naaman*. Here were servants, and horses, and chariots—perhaps camels and asses. It was what we call a cavalcade, a caravansera. We have the expression "the company" which attended Naaman. And when I mention to you that the silver which was brought as a present amounted, in our money, to three thousand, three hundred and thirty-five pounds, eighteen shillings, and ninepence; and that the gold which he brought amounted to ten thousand, nine hundred and twenty-five pounds; making fourteen thousand, four hundred and sixty pounds in solid money, besides the ten changes of raiment; you will see, in a moment, that there must have been servants to have attended to all this, and to preserve order. There is no censure pronounced upon them, no particular condemnation; and so I infer that, though, like their master, without religion, and idolaters, they were persons of fair character, and respectable habits; and I will dismiss them without saying any more about them, and call your attention,

Lastly, to *the servant of the prophet, Gehazi*. "Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the Lord liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him." Here is activity, cunning, wit, impiety; with an oath he sware all this. "So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him." He showed respect to the man for his master's sake. "And he said, Is all well? And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from Mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments." Here is invention—here is genius—here is a ready story! He is furnished with every thing he wants in a moment. The devil comes to help liars: the children of this world are often wiser in their genera-

tion than the children of light. "And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents." He did not want two talents; that was rather too much in his situation; he would not know how to dispose of so much money as that—three hundred and fifty pounds, and more. But Naaman urged him; and so he took it, and two changes of garments: and they were laid upon two of his servants, and there was enough for both of them to carry, weight enough for two men, the servant of the prophet walking carefully behind. "And when he came to the tower," (that is, the gate of Samaria) "he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed." It was all delightfully managed; it was all happily secure; he had imposed upon Naaman; his master would know nothing of the transaction. But had he imposed upon God? Did he not know that there was no darkness, no shadow of death, where the thief, and the liar, and the worker of iniquity could hide himself? Had he forgotten that he was open to the vision of the piercing and awful eye of God? He could not have been so ignorant; but he heeded it not. So "he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither:" as innocent as a lamb; as guiltless as a child! When one lie is told, there must be another: when one sin is committed, it must be fortified and upheld by a long train. "And Elisha said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and maid-servants?" And here the secret of the man's mind came out: he had been building castles in the air; he would have an establishment of his own; he had got seven hundred pounds and more; he would buy a house; he would have a vineyard; he would have sheep, he would have oxen, he would be a great man. All this was passing in his mind. "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence, a leper as white as snow." He had better to have had an empty purse and a clean conscience, an ordinary coat and a whole skin, than to have the full purse and the beautiful raiment, and the noisome leprosy along with it.

It has been thought that the punishment in this case was severe; but look at the complicated nature of the offence. There was, as I have said, falsehood, clearly deceit: he obtained this by false pretences. What was worse than all, he exposed his master's character to suspicion and to doubt; because Naaman, you would suppose, would immediately conjecture that the prophet wanted the money, and desired the raiment, though he wanted confidence to say so. That was the worst part of the transaction: it was lying, not so much to men, as to God; it was like the sin of Ananias and Sapphira; and so the man found it out to be.

Now here are three classes of servants; the very good, the middling, the intolerably bad and base. Aim to belong to the good. Remember what the apostle Paul has said: "Adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." What is a person worth who has no principle, no fixed honesty, no resolute honour? What is a person worth who can be turned aside, and changed about, by the opportunities of vice, and the facilities of transgression? Follow, then, after, capture—not Naaman, his garments and his gold—but follow what the scriptures are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just

whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report. And if there be any whose conscience smites for picking and stealing, injustice or wrong in any form, repent; cease to do evil, learn to do well. Think of the Israelitish maid: your interest and your honour are in it. Think of Gehazi: you must be found out and punished if you are like him.

I have done with the servants, and I come to **THE SOLDIER**—the commander in chief of the Syrian forces.

And I wish to mark his *rank*. He was commander of the host of the King of Syria. He was a great man with his master. He is said by the rabbies to have been the person who aimed at Ahab, and smote him through the joints of the harness; because “by him the Lord had given deliverance to Syria.” And you remark here, that when even Syrian and idolatrous armies are victorious, it is ascribed to God. He was also a mighty man in valour: he is said to have been a giant, a person of large stature, and commanding aspect; in every respect a man competent to his situation, and of great abilities.

I wish to mark, secondly, his *malady*. “But he was a leper:” and as Bishop Hall has justly said, “The basest slave in Syria would not have changed skins with him; no, not though he should have had his military prowess and his master’s favour into the bargain.” “But he was a leper.” And so in almost every condition in this life there is something unfavourable: there is a crook in every lot; there is a *but* in every person’s condition. “He is a man of great abilities, *but* of bad character.” “He is a man of great public spirit and zeal in political affairs, *but* he neglects his wife, and is unkind to his children, and his private character is infamous.” “He is a man whose private virtues are exquisitely pure and perfect, *but* he has no public spirit.” “He is very opulent, *but* he has no children.” “He has plenty of children, *but* they have no grace; they are his crosses, and not his comfort.” And so I might go through almost the lot of every person, and find something in it which answers to the expression here respecting Naaman the Syrian. O it is a mercy when the *but* in our condition is only the leprosy in the flesh—is not that deeper stain of vice, and condemnation, and moral loathsomeness, of which leprosy is the figure and the symbol. And give me leave further, to ask what must that world be where in every creature there is perfection, and in every station purity and satisfaction to the full! That is the world to which I hope you are going.

Permit me to observe, further, his *mistake*. The King of Syria said, “Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the King of Israel.” And accordingly Naaman departed with a letter to the King of Israel: and “when the King of Israel had read the letter, he rent his clothes, and said, Am I a god, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.” Here are two kings and the commander in chief of the forces, in a matter of religion all totally in the dark. And if I wanted to be informed upon some nice points of scriptural biography, where do you think I should go? To the Court? When Sir Joshua Reynolds brought out his picture of Samuel bowing before the ark, some of the great and fashionable people of the time asked who Samuel was. Do you think I should go to the House of Commons? Do you think I should go to Oxford, or to Cambridge, or to the King’s College, or to the London University? Nay, I would not go to any one of them. I would go into a Sunday School: I would go into a well-ordered, well-disciplined, well-



instructed, religious family : and I would catechize some lovely little maid, and I should get the information that I wanted. This Jehoram needed not have been in such a fever : he was not the *best* man of his times : he was just as well acquainted with the calves of Bethel, as Naaman was with the idolatries of Rimmon. All this is affectation and pretence : he did not care any thing about God, and God's prophet : but it suited his purpose just then to say so. And then it shows the darkness of a suspicious mind. It was not as he supposed ; war was not desired. So it is very often with a suspicious mind, that evil is imagined to be where there is none. But that which I now remark upon is, that the two kings and Naaman were all in the dark upon this question ; and they would have remained so if the prophet had not, by God's command, miraculously interposed.

This brings me to another point. I wish you to notice *the pride and the vanity* of Naaman. " So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha." I suppose the whole company were there—the mules laden with the presents, and the servants riding upon the camels, as well as the great man himself in his chariot : they all stood before the mean door (as we may suppose it was) of the prophet. And when the messenger came out, saying, " Go, and wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean," Naaman " was wrath, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." He must be recovered in his own way ; the prophet must come, and stand, and do obeisance. God must honour him ; he will condescend to accept God's gift in his own way. So it is, as Dr. Clarke has said respecting the nobleman who said to Christ, " Come down, for my child will die," that there are people who hardly know how to be civil, even to Almighty God himself. I am quite aware that honour is to be rendered to whom honour is due : but there are persons who sometimes come to listen to us in our ministrations, and ask personal conferences with us at our houses, and it seems as if they felt that an honour was conveyed, that a benefit was communicated ; not as if *they* were the recipients. It may not be proper to any minister in these times to behave exactly as the prophet did. I have been told of some things of this nature which I did not at all approve of, and which seemed to my mind to be uncourteous. But here is Naaman the Syrian in his pride and passion ; because the prophet did not honour him as he expected, away he goes in a rage. And now what fools they all appear ! They had come from Damascus to Samaria—for what purpose ? If the Israelitish maid had been there, rebuke, perhaps remonstrance, or irony and scorn, to say the least, would have been her portion. But in a rage passion is ever blind. Passion is like a vicious horse, which will smash all things to pieces. Never let passion lead : put not the reins into the hands of fury. Let reason, let principle be your chariot wheels ; they will guide you safely : if passion should have the reins, you will come to no good.

There was no reason in this rage. The man said in his rage, " Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel ? May I not wash in them, and be clean ?" No ; you had no divine commandment respecting these rivers : these rivers have never been subjected to any miraculous operation. In Jordan miracles had been wrought : " What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest ? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back ?" As I said, there was no reason in this man's rage.

I wish you to notice further, his *prudence* in listening to what his servants said. They "came near, and spake unto him, My father." This word expresses at once their reverence and their affection: and it does honour to them that they could give such advice; and it does honour to Naaman that he was ready to receive it. And it is most true that bad counsel you are not to receive, though it be from the hands of beauteous Eve herself; and that good counsel you *are* to receive, though it should come from one of the meanest of your fellow-creatures. Well, they reason with him, and say, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather, then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?" His rage was overcome; his passion was pacified; he acted according to their counsel. Now rage is bad; but fixed malevolence is worse. I have known men to be firm against remonstrance; and they have said, "I will persist in my course, whatever the consequences may be: I will go on, though I die for it; yea, I will, though I go to hell for it." Then you are a fool; you are a reckless and an insane person. Then you will have all time, and all eternity, to repent in; and your repentance will be in vain. If *you* are going wrong, listen to remonstrance from whomsoever it may come.

Now I have to mark his *obedience*. They went not back to Damascus, but right on, as fast as they could go, unto the Jordan. Naaman, we must have supposed, disrobed himself; and he dipped in: he came out, and the leprosy was upon him. He did it again; and perhaps the healing virtue began to appear: but according to the commandment he did it seven times; and it is said "his flesh came again, like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." If any of you have had a son or a daughter two years old—healthy, happy, fleshy, modest, whom you have squeezed, and kissed, and loved; you can enter into the exquisite beauty of this similitude: "his flesh was like the flesh of a little child." What a delightful change! No more a nuisance to others, and an abomination to himself: no longer noisome, and walking about in shame and dishonour; but in health, in freshness, in bloom, in vigour, and in beauty again. Blessed was Naaman the Syrian when he received from God the gift of his perfect cure.

And here is the *Gospel*, and the Gospel unto *perfection*. "Had he said, Do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" And in order to salvation, men would be great doers: penances, austerities, inflictions upon the body, prayers, fastings, charities, tears; my first-born for my transgression; the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul; any thing, every thing; my life; all my goods to the poor; my body to be burned; if it will secure the salvation of my soul. Nay, it will not; none of these things—no "great thing" at all. "Go, dip in Jordan." Go, wash in the fountain that is open for sin and for uncleanness: Go, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ: nothing else in the world. The Apostle has language on this subject stronger than I have given you. "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man who doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring down Christ from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth

the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." It is not, "*Do*, and live," but, "*Believe*, and live:" it is not, "Work, and he cleansed;" it is, "Accept the virtue of Christ's blood, and all the leprosy of sin, all the impurity of transgression, vanishes away for ever." You must wash seven times. You have done it once—you must do it again: you must wash and wash till your dying day; you must do it in your last hour; and then in consummate purity arise to the society of angels, as pure as any one of them.

I wish you to notice his *gratitude*. As soon as he was healed, he did not hasten home; he did not go off, as fast as he could drive, to his wife and his palace, to his kindred and his king: but he came, and he, and his company stood at the prophet's door. "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" Only one, and he a Gentile, came and returned thanks to Jesus Christ. Here is Naaman recognizing his obligation both to the prophet and to God. There is nothing I like to see so much as a grateful man: a man uttering a song of praise to God: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me bless his holy name. He has healed my disease: from him I have received this help and cure." And I would rather hear Naaman expressing himself thus at the prophet's door, than listen to the sweetest melody of any nightingale in the world. Nothing is so sweet to the mind as man expressing joyfully his thankfulness to God.

And now, lastly, I must notice his *infirmity*. What did he mean by the "two mules' burden of earth?" I cannot tell what. The Mahometans, when they go to their sacred place, bring away portions of the earth, and make an altar of it, and say their prayers before it. Peradventure Naaman thought, that as there were virtues in the waters of the Jordan, so also was there in the earth of the Israelitish territory. But let this pass: what does he mean when he asks permission to bow with his master in the house of Rimmon? Rimmon, as you know, was the idolatrous temple of Damascus. It is not certain exactly what the word means. Probably Baal, an image, a figure, was there adored as the type and image of sin. It is thought by some to have been a pomegranate, because pomegranates were there in great estimation, and yielded a very precious liquor; and they are supposed to have worshipped this deity, as the Grecians and Romans worshipped their goddess Ceres. But be that as it may, it was the temple of an idol; and the expositors tell us it means, not that he wished to go into the temple with his master in time to come, but that he begged pardon for having been an idolater in time past. I am rather of opinion, however, that it means that he wanted permission to go into the temple, and to lean on his arm, and not to worship in time to come. And it may give me an opportunity to say, that, when we are enlightened and converted, we shall never ask forgiveness of sins that we intend and purpose to commit: that is utterly inconsistent and antichristian. And if any man shall say, "I shall go to a ball, but shall not dance: I shall go to the theatre, but I shall not join in its profligacies: I shall go to a card-party, but I shall not play at cards:" will you? Perhaps you had better not: perhaps you had better have nothing to do with the air, or the roof, or the house of Rimmon. Perhaps you had better listen to the advice of the apostle Paul, "Be not conformed to the spirit and maxims of this world." Perhaps you had better remember that the fashions of the world pass away. It is only as we are separate from

all ungodliness, and do the will of God, that we and our works are to abide for ever.

Thirdly, **THE PROPHET**. Here is *his regard for the divine honour*. He sent to Jehoram and to Naaman to say, "I undertake a cure shall be effected. Let him know that in Israel there is a God who can kill and make alive, who can send sickness and health : let him know that I am his prophet, and that the Israelitish maid is not mistaken."

Here is his *dignity*. When Naaman was proud, he would not let him come near him ; to teach Naaman that he had a benefit to receive, and not an honour to confer. The prophet magnified not himself, but his office.

Then his *disinterestedness* : he would receive no present. Here is a Syrian, here is a new convert, who is to be taught that his miraculous cure transcends all price, is above every thing that money could purchase. And, moreover, he is to see revealed religion in unclouded loveliness, in noble generosity, in total separation from the cupidity and covetousness of an earthly mind. And here was the great sin of Gehazi, that he did his best to tarnish this great principle.

And notice, finally, his *antipathy to sin*—his abhorrence of it. There is strong feeling in the malediction which he pronounced on his servant : "The leprosy, therefore, of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever."

Nothing is more dignified here, except, finally, **THE PROPHET'S GOD**.

Many persons in all this narrative would overlook God ; they would not see Deity in it at all. And yet the whole account is full of God. We see here his being and perfections as opposed to our own ignorance and feebleness. We see his *sovereignty*. Christ, referring to this narrative, says, that "many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus ;" but God singled out one on whom he chose the benefit of cure. And he singles out, in like manner, those on whom he chooses to confer the benefits of salvation.

Then, here is the *divine providence*. God watched over this little maid as he did over Joseph. God superintended that wheel within the wheel, which gave occasion to all these ulterior movements. God commanded the account to be written in the holy Book : God holds it up to the eyes of all nations. God writes the Scriptures, and tells us to search the Scriptures ; and has given me commandment for the duty done this day ; and presents to your notice the facts and the principles which have been opened to you this day.

And finally, here is *God's disapprobation of sin*, and *God's love of holiness* : for he set his seal at once on the verdict of the prophet, and holds out the prophet to us, in his disinterestedness and integrity, as an example to be imitated and to be admired. Remove God from all these transactions, and the life is gone from the body, and the sun from the firmament. It is all full of God.

And the end is this : That *servants* from all this should learn integrity, love of truth, and honesty. That *masters* should learn charity, courteousness, kindness, consolation. That *God's ministers* should learn disinterestedness, to avoid whatever is covetous, to stand perfectly free and clear from the love of money. And that *every one of us* should learn to put our trust in that kind and gracious Providence which sheltered and honoured the little maid ; that kind and gracious Providence which, as we put our trust in it, will shadow every one of us with its wings ; that Providence which watches the sparrow in its flight, the hero in his course, and guides the vessel to its destination. And to that God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—be present and eternal praises. Amen.



THE SUCCESS OF PETER AND JOHN IN PREACHING THE GOSPEL THE  
EFFECT OF PRAYER.

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REV. W. JAY.

SURREY CHAPEL, MARCH 15, 1835.

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"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."—ACTS, iv. 31, 32.

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YOU read in the prophecies of God's "reviving his work in the midst of the years;" of "a set time to favour Zion;" and of "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." Such seasons as these, my brethren, are always interesting to the real Christian; and in reading history, he meets with them as a man travelling through a dry and sandy desert finds a few green, well-watered spots, inviting his eye, and refreshing his foot, and relieving his thirst: and many of these seasons are recorded in the pages of inspiration. It was a blessed time when the Jews came out of Egypt; it was the kindness of their youth, "the love of their espousals: when they went after Thee in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown; and Israel was holiness to the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase." It was a blessed time when, under the ministry of Samuel, all the house of Israel mourned after the Lord. It was a blessed time, too, when David, with the voice of joy and gladness, with the multitude of them that kept holy day, fetched up the ark of the Lord from the house of Obed-Edom, and placed it in Jerusalem. It was a blessed time when Solomon dedicated the temple, and when that fine young pious prince led the devotions of the whole nation, and exclaimed, "Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth?" It was a blessed time when the Jews, returning from Babylon, laid the foundation of the second temple, and when also they brought forth the top-stone thereof with shouting, crying, "Grace, grace unto it." It was a blessed time when John, the forerunner of the Messiah, preached the kingdom of God, and all men received it. But nothing will bear a comparison with the transactions recorded in the beginning of this book: you may peruse them at your leisure, for we shall not have time even to read them this evening; but must instantly call your attention to the words which I have read: "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things that he possessed **was his own; but they had all things common.**"

Let us consider the prayer, and the preaching, and the people.

First, **THE PRAYER.** "And when they had prayed." You may observe *the occasion* of the prayer. Peter and John had been apprehended, and brought before the council; but there they successfully defended themselves, and appealed to the miracles they had performed, adding, "No; we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done. For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed." Like not only begets like, but attracts like.—"And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them." What did they and their brethren on this occasion? What did Hezekiah when he received the letter from Rabshakeh? He "carried it up into the temple, and spread it before the Lord." What did John's disciples, upon the murder of their master? They "took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus." What are you all enjoined to do in your distresses? "Call upon me in the day of trouble." "Is any afflicted? Let him pray." So the persecuted disciples immediately gave themselves to prayer.

We may observe *the substance* of the prayer. "And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice together with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done in the name of thy holy child Jesus." You cannot expect that I should enlarge upon the whole of this prayer: suffice it to observe, it was very seasonable, and very suitable, and very short, as all the prayers in the Bible are; for they never thought that they should be heard for their much speaking: they knew that God was in the heavens, and they upon the earth, and that therefore their words should be few.

But there was one thing in this prayer very exemplary: though they had been so evil entreated, yet they felt no disposition for revenge. They remembered the instructions of Him who had said, "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you." They had imbibed the spirit of Him "who when he was reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered threatened not, but committed himself into the hands of him that judgeth righteously." And therefore, you see, they beseeched God to "stretch forth his hand"—not to strike and punish, but to heal.

And there was something very extraordinary in this prayer: though the Jews acted so wickedly in putting the Saviour to death, yet they did it "according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Now do you expect

from me a solution of this difficulty? Here is a chain thrown across a river; I can see the two opposite ends, but not the union in the midst: but were the chain raised, or the water lower, I could see the connexion as well as the extremities. "Secret things belong unto God; but things that are revealed belong to us and to our children." All our knowledge of the affair begins and ends here; God's foreknowledge and man's free agency harmonize really but inexplicably.

We have, then, *the success* of the prayer. Cowper has said,

" That were a grief I could not bear—  
Didst thou not hear and answer prayer.  
But a prayer-hearing, answering God,  
Supports me under every load."

And God never said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye my face in vain." "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." The sign of the acceptance of the prayer seems strange: "the place was shaken where they were assembled together." Now, we know it was common for the Jews and the heathen to consider every sudden, extraordinary concussion, as an intimation of the approach of Deity: but that the place should be shaken as if endangered by an earthquake, and as if trembling about their ears, seemed much more likely to produce dread than to gender hope. But so God would teach us, that he is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints; that he would be sanctified of all them that come nigh to him; that there was something awful, even in the dispensation of his mercy and his grace. He sometimes answers his people as the God of their salvation by terrible things. As Dr. Watts expresses it,

" Terrors attend the wond'rous way,  
That brings our blessings down."

But how are we to understand *the effect*? "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." It has two references. It first refers to his *extraordinary agency*. This was now necessary in their circumstances; and they had already been enabled to speak suddenly many languages which they had never learned, and healed with a word a man lame from his mother's womb. Thus the grand seal of heaven was affixed to their commission. But though these extraordinary influences were then needful, they were not to be continued: indeed, if they had been continued, they would have been extraordinary no longer. The possession of them never was an evidence of the godliness of the possessor. Balaam prophesied as sublimely as ever Isaiah did; and Judas performed miracles as well as Peter and John. Many will be disowned by our Saviour in the last day, who will yet be able to plead, "Have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" And, therefore, while you should not look for these now, you should not envy those who were the partakers of them. The Apostle says to the Corinthians, "Covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." That is, as he adds, "Seek after the possession of *the graces* of God's Spirit—faith, hope, and charity, these three; and remember that the greatest of these is charity. Seek to be filled with the Spirit as a teacher, an enlivener, a renewer, a comforter."

For, my brethren, you will observe, that the expression refers to the *special*

*influences* of the Holy Ghost. These are here properly intended, when it is said, "They were filled with the Holy Ghost." They were now called to fresh deeds, fresh difficulties, fresh dangers; and therefore they required fresh supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And their strength was made equal to their day; and they obtained accessions of illumination, and confidence, and courage, and peace, and joy, and were prepared to stand complete in all the will of God.

Secondly, **THE PREACHING.** "And they spake the word of God with boldness." The very thing, you see, which they had been praying for: "That we may speak the word of God with all boldness." The very thing Paul beseeches the Ephesians to implore on his behalf: "And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds, that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." You here see the fortitude of these holy men; and in order to judge of it properly, you must consider the circumstances in which they now were. They were like lambs among wolves; their Master had been put to death, and they were hated of all men for his name's sake. They had to contend with those who possessed power and authority; and who were determined, if possible, to crush them. They knew not what a day or an hour might bring forth. They had been forbidden to speak; they had been menaced; they had been persecuted and imprisoned. But notwithstanding this, they spake the word with boldness. They knew that they had nothing to do with futurity; this belongs to God. They knew they had nothing to do with consequences; they knew that "he who walketh uprightly walketh surely;" and that "the path of duty is the path of safety." They knew that if we stand by God, God will always stand by us; and that if we serve him, he will take care of us; of our persons, and our reputations too. You see how little these men were governed by the opinions of the people around them: you see that they did not walk in craftiness, nor handle the word of God deceitfully; nor appeal to the fancies and the wishes of the individuals before them; but by manifestation of the truth they commended themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Suppose a number of persons were to call on a minister on the Sabbath morning, and, being admitted into his study, one of them should say unto him, "I hope, Sir, you do not mean to-day to be severe against avarice; for I love money, and my heart goes after my covetousness." And suppose another should say, "I trust you will not be severe against backbiting: for my tongue walketh with slanderers; and I consider scandal to be the seasoning of all conversation." And suppose another should say, "Do not represent implacability as being inconsistent with divine forgiveness; for I never did forgive such an one, and I never will forgive him:" and so of the rest.—What would this minister say to these men? Why, if he was in a proper state of mind, he would say, "O thou child of the devil! thou heir of all unrighteousness! when wilt thou cease to pervert the right ways of God? Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not of the things that be of God, but of those that be of man." Our people are not likely to address us in this way: no, they will be restrained by fear or shame. Those are your *wishes*; this is the *meaning* of many of you; but if the minister be a man of God, he will say—



“ Careless, myself a dying man,  
Of dying men’s esteem ;  
Happy, O God, if thou approve,  
Though all beside condemn.”

“ Three things equalize,” says Bishop Hall ; “ the grave, the judgment-bar, and the pulpit. The grave makes no difference; the judgment-bar makes no difference; and the pulpit should know none.” Daniel addressed Nebuchadnezzar as a common man : “ God,” says he, “ in whose hands thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified : break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor ; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.” John the Baptist was as rough as the garment he wore ; and he was not ashamed to tell Herod, that magistracy itself is not above law : “ It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife.” James the First said of one of his chaplains, “ Why this man always preaches before me as if death stood at his elbow.” Why death *does* always stand at the preacher’s elbow ; and he ought to be able to say with Baxter, “ I preach as if I should never preach again ; and as a dying man to dying men.” Nothing was so obnoxious to the Jews, as the announcement of the vocation of the Gentiles ; and yet Isaiah was very bold, and said, “ I am found of them that sought me not ; I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a people that was not called by my name.” Nothing would have been so gratifying to the Galatians, as that the Judaizing doctrines that some of them brought should be tolerated : “ But,” says the Apostle, “ if I seek to please men, I should not be the servant of Christ :” and therefore he could appeal to the elders of the Church of Ephesus, and say, “ I am free from the blood of all men ; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” If the minister go on in this course, he will ensure the satisfaction of his own mind, and the veneration of the wise and good, and gain the conviction and approbation of those that ridiculed and condemned him ; and, in a little time, his God will say to him, “ Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Thirdly, **THE PEOPLE.** “ And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul : neither said any of them that ought of the things he possessed was his own ; but they had all things common.” Verily this may be called, as it has been, the golden age of Christianity ; we may well exclaim, “ How has the gold become dim ! how has the fine gold changed !” What a beautiful representation have we here ! Here is a glorious scene ! Compared with this, what are all the trappings of the worldly sanctuary, or what the scarlet (excuse the language of Scripture) the scarlet of the whore of Babylon ?

The people are here described by four things. The first regards *their number*. There was “ a multitude” of them. Now, there is something very remarkable in this fact : and yet it accords with our Saviour’s declaration, who always represented his kingdom as very small in the beginning, like a little leaven in the meal, and like a mustard seed in the ground ; but then this little leaven was to leaven the whole lump, and this mustard seed was to become a mustard-tree, large enough for the fowls of the air to sleep in the branches thereof. Accordingly so it was : our Saviour first opened his mind to twelve, then to seventy ; the common people heard him gladly and many among the poor

were evangelized; and some even of the rulers believed on him. Then we read of "five hundred brethren at once," on the Galilean mount: and then we read of one hundred and twenty in an upper room at Jerusalem; and then three thousand were pricked in the heart under one sermon, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?" And this, you will observe, was all in the very place where he had been crucified: and many of these we have reason to believe, were his murderers, or, at least, that they had been accessories, taking pleasure in them that did it. This is not all; in a little time, in the same place, we find five thousand more: and all this in distinction from those who were "daily added to the Church of such as should be saved." And then we read, that "the word of the Lord increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of priests were obedient to the faith." And then we also read of "all the churches throughout all Galilee, and Samaria, and Judea;" and so of others. This was "the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes." "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." We are very ready to concede, that success, by itself, is no absolute proof of the divinity of a cause; for what shall we do then with Mahometanism and Popery? But we contend, that here the case is so unspeakably peculiar, and that the instrumentalities employed were so perfectly, in themselves, inadequate to the result, that the effect must induce us to exclaim, "This is the finger of God."

The second particular regards *their character*. "The multitude *believed*." This term "believed," simply signifies, having a mental persuasion, or giving credit to the subject submitted for consideration. The subject reported by the apostles had been unknown, or held in contempt, before: but now the people received it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance; and they now received it, not as the word of man, but as it was in truth, the word of God. And the belief became the germ of godliness in the soul, and the influence of it worked effectually in them that believed. Is this always the case with belief? There are some persons who contend that all belief is necessarily influential, and must operate according to the nature and importance of the truth received. We readily allow that it ought to be so; and it would be so if men were in a proper state of mind; but man is not now in a proper state of mind; he is in a fallen condition; and much of the fall appears in the derangement of the powers and operations of his soul: so that he now can see and approve better things, and yet follow worse; so that the clearest decisions of his judgment, the fullest dictates of his conscience, shall be counteracted by his passions and lusts. I will mention, not a proof of this, but a demonstration of it, at once. You all know and believe that you shall die; there is no one thing you believe with more firmness. Now I ask you, then, What influence has this belief over you? Do you live as dying creatures? Or, rather, do you not live as if you were expecting to live here always? The same will apply to any other subject. James, therefore, shows the inutility of that faith which consists in a credence of the truth, without a change of heart, without its working by love, and overcoming the world. You believe! what is this? Believe! so do the devils: the devils believe, and tremble, and remain devils still. A wicked man may hold the truth in unrighteousness. "Take heed, therefore," says St. James, "he is a vain man who says he has faith, and has not works." Can faith save him? Yes, it can: but not such faith

as he is speaking of. See to it, therefore, that ye are not satisfied with a persuasion of mind, without a renovation of heart. See to it that your faith is more than a consent to truth as credible; see that it be always accompanied with the disposition which the Scriptures have connected invariably with the faith that justifies before God. Such a disposition is to be seen, not only in your assent, but in your consent; not only in your submission, but in your acquiescence; because, with your approbation of the way must be connected your application of the way. Your belief must be seen in your coming to his feet, and crying out, "Lord save, or I perish;" in your love to his dear name; in your readiness to forsake all for him; in your mourning for sin; in your hungering and thirsting after righteousness; in the little account you make of this world, and the largeness of your store in the world which is to come.

The third regards *their unity*. "The multitude of them that believed were of *one heart and of one soul*." One object employed them; one cause engaged them; one principle swayed them. It must be obvious to you all, that the views, and tempers, and habits of men are very various; and, therefore, they are only to be brought into a state of social connexion by an object that is important and interesting—mutually important and interesting. All of you can find such a subject as this in the Gospel; and, therefore, in the language of prophecy it is said, that "all nations shall flow unto it," as so many streams flowing from different sources towards the same fulness—the sea. When the brazen serpent was erected in the midst of the camp, it became the centre of attraction and regard; all who were wounded and dying were of one heart to look towards it. Our Saviour, in allusion to this, says, "I, if I be lifted up (on the cross), will draw all men unto me." If there were but one well for the inhabitants of a village or a town, why they must all repair to this, or perish. Said Jacob, when he was dying, "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be:" Isaiah said, "To him shall men come." Joseph had all the corn in the country, and therefore all the famishing multitude, who wished for relief, were of one heart and soul in sending to him for succour: So it is here, "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" and therefore, says he, "Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." Did you ever observe the language of Isaiah here? "The wolf also," says he, "shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cocatrice' den." You are not to take this *literally*; and for this reason—because you see the effect here mentioned is to be produced by the diffusion of the Gospel; for, he adds, "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." You are to take it *metaphorically*. The creatures described, are, in their nature, repulsive to each other; so they very properly represent the strongest prejudices and passions, which render men inimical to each other, and lead them to bite and devour one another. This was particularly the case at this time: Judea was divided by sects and parties, and was torn and distracted by fends and animosities, as it had never been before; public,



private, political, and religious—they extended through every family, and destroyed every thing like happiness there: the hearts of the fathers were turned from their children, and the hearts of the children were turned from their fathers. Here was a state! And can all these become one heart and one soul? Yes. How? By being brought under the almighty influence of the Gospel: and this was the case, the ferocity of disposition gave way to the meekness and gentleness of Jesus Christ: then that restlessness of man, which had been like the sea, which casts up mire and dirt, was stilled by the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Then they strove together for the faith of the Gospel; they were perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment: they were of one heart and one soul; one in their need of these blessings, one in their desire after them, one in their valuation of them, one in their concern to diffuse them, and to extend them to all their fellow-creatures. Having given up themselves to the Lord, they give up themselves to each other by the will of God, in testimony of their joint satisfaction with their new views, and the harmony of the sentiments and principles which they had embraced. Regarding only now the religious public welfare, they “looked not each man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” They were as one family; they were as one body; where if one member suffers, all the members suffer with him, if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice.

You will note here, that as they were now so numerous in Jerusalem, they must have worshipped in many rooms; for they had no buildings, for ages after this, appropriated to divine worship: they must have worshipped in many places, and have been addressed by as many preachers. Not that they were divided: but though divided into so many parts, there were no parties among them; they had not yet learned to be carnal and walk as men, saying, “I am of Paul, and I of Apollos.” They could say with Paul, “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity:” they could stretch forth their hands, towards the disciples, as the Saviour did, and say, “Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother.” Such was the genuine effect of Christianity in its original lustre, and such we are fully persuaded will be the result of it again, when the Spirit shall be poured out from on high. The reason why we have so little of this in our day is, because, with all our professions and advantages, we live so little at the centre of Christianity; because we lay so much stress on things which the Scriptures have left at large; because we are disposed to look too speculatively, too fantastically, too metaphysically—I was even going to say, too mathematically, into the things of God. We are divided into too many sects and parties: Calvin must have his complete scheme of Calvinism; and Arminius his system of Arminianism; and various others must have their systems, to the exclusion of every other scheme. But from the beginning it was not so: they who were thus filled with the Spirit of God present an example for our imitation. They were satisfied with the words the Holy Ghost used, without requiring a mere definition of creed; though in some cases their ideas were less perspicuous than could be desired, yet if they were disposed to rest the whole weight of their salvation upon Christ, and make him the centre of their union, and give him the glory of his Godhead, why they all had given them the right hand of fellowship. Being thus knit together in love,



they felt themselves so united that they forgot (or rather they never knew) the distinctions that since have been introduced among *us*. Though the present day has been so sullied by the mistakes, and contentions, and animosities of professing Christians, yet, blessed be God, the disposition formerly manifested is not entirely abolished. There are some things still, proving that, while we receive the truth as it is in Jesus, and live under the influence of it, we shall live as brethren, and be pitiful and courteous, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. President Edwards observes, in describing the revival of religion under his ministry, that after preaching his first sermon, he observed a very peculiar and striking effect. When the service was over, and the congregation had withdrawn, two families, in different parts of the church remained, as if by joint consent. After a while he went out and addressed them: he then found, that these two families had been living for a considerable time at variance; but now that the Holy Spirit was poured down, they felt a mutual determination, that they would not leave the house of God, until they had been reconciled and embraced each other in his bosom.

Lastly, they are described by *their liberality*. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." You have heard often of the communion of the saints; here you have the thing literally. These Christians resemble the Jews, when they went out into the wilderness to gather manna: "He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack:" their property, by a conventional giving and receiving, being intermingled, became a kind of joint-stock, from which every man drew according to his need.

A few words here will be necessary, by way of explanation or qualification. I need not tell some of you how this example was abused by some early heretics, who pushed the thing so far as to plead even for a community of wives, and goods in every thing. This we presume—for it is not easy absolutely to determine; for all their vilenesses and abuses are first introduced ambiguously—but we presume, that this is the mystery of iniquity which the St. Simonians in France have been endeavouring to establish there; and for which some months ago they came to London, but in vain: for though as a people I believe we are the most credulous on the face of the earth, and every folly and every delusion imported from the Continent, as soon as it is imported into the English soil, flourishes rankly, at least for a time; yet, blessed be God, they could not succeed here. "But," says Solomon, "What is there concerning which we may say, See this is new?" Truth is like the sun; it rises daily, and regularly, and performs the same course: but errors are like comets, they have their periods of return, some of which are speedier and some slower. Some fanaticisms which have abounded of late, seem as far as we can judge from history, to have returned once in about fifty years: quite often enough.

But, my brethren, to return to the subject before us: it would be a wild and extravagant opinion to support, and draw as a needful inference from this part of the subject, that all distinctions of property ought to be destroyed. But in the last two years there have been some individuals in the West of England, who have been victims to such delusions; who have acted upon this principle, and

have resigned every advantage of income and profession : and when I see men willing to level themselves down to others, as well as to level themselves up to others, I admire their honesty, whatever I think of their judgment.

Now you will observe, in the case before us, that the state of the Gospel and the Church was very peculiar. You will observe, that many of these Christians had come from afar, expecting to return immediately after the festival was over ; but having been unexpectedly converted there, it seemed expedient, and even necessary, that they should remain to be instructed in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And they themselves would earnestly desire it ; and the impressions made upon them by these new sentiments, would render them for a time comparatively dead to every thing else. But is this the state of things now ? Does the Gospel now have any local attraction ? We are not called to wander from sea to sea, from the North even to the East, to seek the Word of God. The providence of God has now ordained, that labour shall be the common means of subsistence ; and God hath commanded us to “ Labour working with our hands the thing which is good, that we may have wherewith to give to him that needeth.” “ Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.” “ Yea,” says the Apostle, “ if any man will not work neither shall he eat.”

The case too, you will observe, was a voluntary one. It was a thing not enjoined by the Apostles. The Apostle mentions this in his address to Ananias : “ Whiles thy substance remained, was it not thine own ? And after it was sold was it not in thine own power ?” As this was not enjoined at the first, so all down through the New Testament there never is any mention of its afterwards being enforced ; that is, as to the *letter* of it ; for as to the *spirit* of it, this is enforced upon all Christians in every age, and is enforced every where upon them in the Scriptures. There is an instance in the history of our Saviour, of one of his actions, which, by being compared with the case before us, will serve to illustrate it : I refer now to his washing the disciples’ feet. This was intended to be an exemplar—“ That ye should do,” said he, “ as I have done to you.” But how was this to be ? Was the Lord enforcing the performance of *the act itself*, or displaying the *spirit* of the action ?—This is the question. Ferdinand was called, you know, “ the divine Ferdinand ;” that ineffable fool and wretch was accustomed every year to wash the feet of some beggars in the royal palace, in a silver vessel ; and I understand the Pope does the same every year. “ This,” as an old writer expresses it, “ is like a traveller passing by the inn, and embracing the sign post.” It is possible for a man to wash the feet, without imitating Christ ; and he may imitate Christ, without washing the feet ; the thing is to resemble him in the spirit of his actions ; the thing is to display the condescension, and kindness, and benevolence of it. It teaches us that there is no office too mean for us to perform, when a fellow-christian requires it, and the providence of God affords us an opportunity for the discharge of it.

To conclude, therefore, though we cannot engraft the levelling principle upon our text, nor draw from it an argument for a community of goods, there are three things to be deduced from it which you must keep in mind, and exemplify.

First, like them *you are to hold all earthly things with a very slack hand*, since you are to resign them soon, and you are to live looking, not at “ the

things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are not seen and eternal."

Secondly, *you are to consider nothing of what you possess as your own*. It is not your own: if there be any truth in the Scriptures, you are not the proprietors of it, but you are only the stewards of "the manifold grace of God."

Thirdly, *you are to devise, like them, liberal things*; you are to be "willing to distribute, ready to communicate." Some in the Church are in need of temporal relief; others have the capacity of imparting this. The necessities of the saints, above all things, should be provided for: the best members of society are surely not to be disregarded. This is the law of the case—it should be suspended in every church, and continually read—"As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men; but especially unto them who are of the household of faith." "To do good and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." A renewed heart should always be accompanied by a liberal hand. The excuse of some persons when called upon—that they really cannot afford it, is in one sense true, and in another false. But in the sense in which it is true, it betrays the guilt of the excuser; the man cripples himself by his mode of living, and then he pleads his *inability*, as an excuse for his *illiberality*. It is not sufficient for him to maintain a decent distinction from the vulgar; he must live splendidly; he must be magnificent; he must fare sumptuously and be clothed gorgeously every day. As to others, whatever they gain, they hoard it, and who is the better for it? Every unnecessary expense should be avoided. You should enlarge your ability to meet all the claims of Christian benevolence, by diligence in business, by economizing in your household affairs, and by self-denial. Is self-denial a thing that Christians should wonder at? Is self-denial to be disregarded by those who are the followers of Him, who "though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich?" Therefore, "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" May God command his blessing. Amen.

## THE ISRAELITES' DELIVERANCE BY THE HAND OF GIDEON.

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REV. J. E. TYLER, B.D.

ST. GILES'S CHURCH, MARCH 22, 1835.

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“ And what shall I more say ? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon.”—HEB. xi. 32.

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FROM the death of Joshua, through the long period of the government of their judges, the history of God's own people presents to our minds only a repetition of the same course of proceeding again and again. We were led last Sunday to cast our eyes and thoughts this way in part : and we could, I think, scarcely have avoided the impression and feeling of sorrow and shame, for the weakness and waywardness of our fellow-creatures, and of distrust in our own strength of religious principle, and perseverance in duty ; and a fear, lest we also, in the treacherous weakness of our hearts, should fall from our duty, from God's love, and our eternal happiness.

The history of the Israelites at the time to which our attention is now mainly drawn, presents the following melancholy circle of events ; melancholy if we contemplate man, but exhibiting justice and eternal mercy if we think of God's dealings with him. First, wilful sin and rebellion against God visited by punishments ; then these leading to repentance ; then repentance, followed by forgiveness at God's hands, and deliverance from their oppressors ; then peace in Israel, until security engendered forgetfulness of God again, and renewed rebellion and sin. Brethren, these form the revolving circle of the extraordinary events of Palestine, through the long space of above three hundred years.

The oppression, and distress, and misery, immediately preceding the deliverance wrought by Gideon, seem to have been surpassed by none, either before or after. Consequent on the triumph over the Philistines by Barak (whose character you remember, for singleness of purpose, and love of duty for its own sake, without reference to any reward, honour, or power, present or future, in this world, formed the ground-work of our discourse last Sunday)—subsequent to his victory the land of Israel had rest forty years. My brethren, times of peace are times of temptation and moral danger to a nation and to individuals : the Israelites fell into their former guilt, doing evil in the sight of the Lord. The rod of his anger and chastisement was intrusted into the hands of the Midianites, who executed their office unsparingly. A brief, but sad picture, is drawn of their grievous oppressions. “ The hosts of Midian,” saith the sacred historian—“ The hosts of Midian prevailed against Israel ;” and they were driven for their lives to take refuge in the mountains, and caves, and strong-holds for seven years. “ When Israel had sown the land,” these inveterate foes “ came up with their cattle and their tents ; they came as grasshoppers for multitude :



for both they and their camels were without number, and destroyed the increase of the earth, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass : " and Israel was greatly impoverished."

It was at the close of this dreadful visitation, that they were again brought to their senses, and in part to their duty. They applied for help to the only power that was able to rescue and restore them. "The children of Israel cried unto the Lord." The mercy and the loving-kindness of God (as many of you, my brethren, I trust know experimentally) is forced upon our pious notice in every page of the Bible, in all his dealings with man. And in answer to this prayer of the Israelites, we have a most beautiful, a most clear, and at the same time a most delicate portraiture, of his wisdom, his justice, and his mercy combined. To the suffering people he replies only by a remonstrance, convincing them of God's unrequited kindness, of their ungrateful guilt, and the justice of their punishment. "And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage ; and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land ; and I said unto you I am the Lord your God ; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell : but ye have not obeyed my voice." Still though God employs this heart-cutting charge against them, bringing the sins of ingratitude, disobedience, rebellion, and idolatry, fully before their face—whilst he thus humbled them to the dust, and makes them more fit subjects of his mercy, by leading them to repentance, his mercy meanwhile is wholly employed in working out their deliverance. And (blessed be his Name!) his course of dealing with individual sinners now appears often to proceed wholly upon the same principle. He visits us with severe affliction, and the voice of his Providence speaks to our outward ears only in words of reproof, and bitterness, and judgment ; whilst throughout, all the while, he is only working out our salvation, convincing us of sin, calling us to himself and to our duty : and by self-abasement, self-condemnation, and true repentance, preparing us for the deliverance by that Saviour, in whom alone is mercy provided.

The sacred historian does not allow a single word to intervene between the severe remonstrance of the Almighty, and the commission given to his servant Gideon, to go in the strength of the Lord, and his own, to rescue his broken-hearted countrymen from the hands of their oppressors. "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto Gideon, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." In the reply to this gracious salutation, we see how far sunk and faint were the stoutest hearts in Israel. "O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us ? And where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt ? But now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the Lord looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites : have not I sent thee ?" Gideon no sooner heard this summons to become the champion and liberator of his nation, than his own utter worthlessness and weakness, raised

an insurmountable obstacle in his mind ; and so long had the good providence of Jehovah seemed to have withdrawn itself from Israel, that his thoughts could not rise to any strength above the power of man. "O my Lord," are his words of doubt and distrust, "wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor, in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." But the Lord said, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." The views of Gideon were immediately changed, and his doubts no longer centred upon his weakness, but on the reality of the divine commission. He knew—for their own history, which the Israelites had heard their fathers tell, would leave no room for doubt—he knew that if the God of heaven, their own Jehovah, was with him, all the world would marshal themselves against him in vain. The Lord, who brought his people out of Egypt, and overwhelmed Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, would doubtless outstretch the same mighty arm in the overthrow of the Midianites.

The question, therefore, of power seemed no longer to perplex him, his own anxiety was transferred to the certainty of supernatural communication. He required a sign, to assure him beyond doubt, that it was indeed the voice of the Lord God Almighty which he had heard: "If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me." And, my brethren, let no Christian wonder, let no one blame him ; his request was reasonable, and it was granted ; God did not upbraid him for disobedience to the heavenly vision, or distrust of his promises. "Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee," was Gideon's prayer: "I will tarry until thou come again," was God's gracious answer. And Gideon returns with his offering of flesh and unleavened cakes, and is commanded to lay them down upon the bare rock. "Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff, and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight." Gideon's soul, like the father of his successor Samson, sunk within him at this awful display of God's immediate presence. No declaration of the law of Moses seems to have made a deeper or more general impression through the descendants of Jacob, than that no mortal could see God's face and live. When Gideon perceived it he said, "Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face." "Peace be unto thee," was the gracious answer; "fear not: thou shalt not die."

This miraculous call, left Gideon no room for doubt; he entered upon God's work forthwith fearlessly. His first act of zeal was to throw down the altar of Baal, and to build one to Jehovah in its stead; to cut down Baal's grove, and to consume a burnt-offering to the Lord with the wood. He first endeavours to remove the horrible guilt of idolatry from his countrymen, before he would face the enemy in the field. But alas, my brethren, for human nature, how hard a thing it is, even with God's judgments before our eyes, and under the actual suffering of his punishment, to break off wholly from inveterate sins! The people were so far brought to their senses by severe affliction, as to call upon God for mercy and deliverance: but, even up to this very time, when Gideon was commissioned to rescue them from the enemy's cruelty, they still clung with obstinate hardihood to the worship of Baal. Is it not so always? How do their relapses differ from the state of Christian hearts now; hearts, at

least, which should be wholly Christian? Men know that they are doing wrong; they know God will visit them in judgment; they feel his rod: and yet their besetting sin cleaves to them; they cannot, they will not, break themselves from it; though they know, and feel, and confess their knowledge of their failings, that final perseverance in their present sin must lead to final ruin. O may God turn our hearts effectually to himself, and save our souls through Christ for ever! If we look to ourselves, indeed, and our own strength, we shall know that we have no more power to work out our own salvation, than Gideon's arm of flesh could rescue the Israelites from their enemies. But the God, in whose strength he was commanded to go forth, has promised to be with every faithful follower of his Son.

Did not the history of our race, and our own daily experience, draw too plain a portrait of the inconsistencies, and waywardness, and folly of the human heart, we should scarcely give credit to the succession of relapses into idolatry, which not the severest, not the acknowledged visitations of the Almighty could prevent. No sooner, however, had Gideon thus vindicated the honour of his own true God, and finished one task, a most difficult task—no sooner had he brought his countrymen to the worship of Jehovah, than he is called upon to deliver them from their merciless oppressors. Their enemies were gathered as heretofore, preparing themselves for their work of pillage and of devastation. Gideon had been once assured that he was the champion, destined by his fathers' God, to work confusion and destruction among their enemies: but when the hour came, his faith, even Gideon's faith, began to fail. And how must we ourselves need, the very best of us need, earnest constant prayer for the preservation of our faith and our integrity, and for its increase! If our faith is not kept up by prayer and Christian duty, it will fail us in the day of Christ. Gideon requires two several proofs that God indeed had chosen him to deliver his people. Enough doubtless had been wrought before; but the patience, and mercy, and long-suffering of God prevailed; and the dew of heaven is commanded to quench the last doubts of Gideon. The miraculous overthrow of the unnumbered hosts of Midian, when the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, is too well remembered by you, my brethren, to need our repeating it: nor shall we require its incidents in our Christian improvement of this passage. The war-cry, containing as it does a most remarkable concentration of doctrine, and lessons of duty, directly applicable to us Christians—the war-cry we must not fail to remember: "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

My brethren, the incidents we have already noticed, will suggest some useful reflections on subjects of vital importance to every one who looks for salvation through Christ alone. From this time the history will be to us as a mirror, in which the images reflected to the eye of faith and divine contemplation, will be no more the stubbornness and rebellion of the children of Israel; but the wickedness, and waywardness, and folly of our own hearts: not the perverseness, and chastisement, and forgiveness of God towards his chosen people, or their merciful deliverance from the yoke of oppression of Midian when they turned again to God; but his long-suffering, his correcting hand in bringing us ourselves to Christ; the rescue of his elect people from sin, and death, and hell; the ways of eternal mercy, and the great work of man's eternal redemption.



The state in which we find the Israelites at the commencement of our narrative, is a state of rebellion and sin: they had "done evil in the sight of the Lord." And can we, my brethren, now view our own nature in any other light, before the religion of Christ has begun to exercise its restoring influence upon it? Believe me, brethren, let the wisdom of this world say what it will (and there is nothing which it is not bold enough to assert), but no system of theology, no system of morals, can be raised on a sound foundation, which is not built upon the natural sinfulness of the human heart. We need not here inquire, whether the degeneracy effected at the fall was total or partial: such speculations tend neither to God's glory in the maintenance of the truth as it is in Jesus, nor our edification in receiving that truth in all its fulness. We are—and that is enough for us to know—we are of our own nature prone to evil.

But then, my brethren, our thoughts may dwell in vain on the general sinfulness of our race: they will dwell not only in vain, but with a very pernicious effect personally to ourselves, if we are withdrawn by the *general* contemplation of man's frailty, from the condition of our own hearts and consciences individually. Let the first examination be into our own transgressions; what evil we have done in the sight of the Lord. And, my brethren, those who have practised this Christian exercise will bear testimony to what I say—that if we conduct the search impartially, we shall soon find in ourselves enough matter for sorrow, and shame, and deep repentance. Alas for the souls of men! how many miserable sinners pass their whole life, without searching and trying their ways by God's own law! How few are brought to early and sincere repentance, and to amendment of life! In many cases the world is all before them; all its delightful snares are spread around them: the great enemy of men's peace has taken them captive at his will; they are bringing their years to an end one after another, in the full enjoyment of present pleasure, in the security of an unenlightened and a sleeping conscience. Is this the condition of any of us here? It is a state more awful and more miserable than we can well conceive. Is it our own case, my brethren? Let each individual search his own heart, and not think of his neighbour. If it be, may God in his mercy devise some means for recalling us to our duty and to himself! It was the condition of the Israelites; let us for a moment reflect upon his dealings with them.

They had fallen very far from him, yet he gave them not up utterly to themselves, and so to destruction. For if God once gives us up to ourselves, it is undoubtedly for our ruin. The means adopted in his mercy was affliction. We can feel to what a state of affliction the whole nation was reduced: Jehovah seemed to have forsaken and forgotten them; and yet all the while he was only engaged in their restoration, by bringing them to repentance and their duty. While his hand was heaviest upon them, he was only waiting for their sorrow, their tears, their confession, and their prayers. Sorrow no sooner turned their hearts to him, their tears of real repentance no sooner flowed, their cry for mercy no sooner reached his ears, than his arm of might was outstretched for their deliverance.

O my brethren, how blessed are the effects of God's severest afflictions, if they work in us individually true repentance and amendment of life. How often has this lesson been successful when every other hath failed. But alas! how often does even this lesson itself fail! Instead of sorrows, and losses, and pains



bringing men to repentance and to God, how frequently are they answered only by impatience, and murmuring, and unwarrantable expedients for relief! Would that this truth could reach the heart of every son and daughter of present affliction—this truth: Temporal calamities are not the effect of chance, but are sent as the messengers from heaven—often with the very last message ever sent from the court of God—to call us to repentance and newness of life.

The Israelites had the records of their nation, which might have taught them, by the example of their forefathers, that sin would be followed by punishment, and that nothing but sincere repentance could secure pardon, and safety, and peace at God's hand: yet these records had become to them a dead letter. Their ears were closed against God's denunciations, his threats and his promises; and had he not in mercy employed the Midianites as the instruments of his justice, they might have settled into idolatry, and been lost for ever. So is it with us, brethren. The Book of God, the Gospel of his grace, is the standing record of his will, our constant monitor; and yet, like the deaf adder, we close our minds against the sounds of mercy, however sweet, and the threats of justice, however alarming: and were we to die in this state, our eternal ruin is fixed. Thus it is of God's mere mercy that temporal afflictions, it may be in our minds, our bodies, or our estates—loss of health, loss of fame, loss of property, loss of friends, are sent. Happy for us if we are roused by them, as the Israelites were by their enemies, to repentance and calling upon the Lord! Miserable soul whom not even the judgments of heaven can awaken, and turn, and save!

To those among us who already have our hearts fixed towards God, but who fear lest our present sorrows are signs of his anger, it may even be matter of comfort and holy hope to reflect, that they are only instruments employed for purifying our souls for heaven's blessed kingdom. God is all the while willing and bringing about our final recovery and salvation. If we return to him in faith and in sincerity (and this he desires in every child of Adam) he will as certainly rescue us from every danger that may befall our souls, and save that soul by Christ for ever, as he delivered the Israelites from the yoke of their enemies by the hand of Gideon.

Our attention is next drawn to the conduct of Gideon, upon the communication of the will of Heaven. He required a clear proof that it was God who called him; and God gave him a miraculous sign. May not the true Christian expect a similar indisputable proof of his acceptance with God? My brethren, there is not a greater religious error than this. Some will not distinguish between some specific call, and the ordinary call of grace. But let me not here be misunderstood. God forbid that any minister of Christ should even appear to question the omnipotence of his grace. He can now convey an assurance to the heart and soul as strong and clear as if a miracle was wrought. But he has not *promised* to do so; and the question with faith is, not what the Almighty *can* do, but what he has *pledged* himself to do: the question is one, not of *power*, but of *covenant*: and the only sign, as I read the Bible, to be now looked for, with certainty, by a Christian, is, the answer of a good conscience, a conscience enlightened by God's Holy Spirit, through his written word and ordinances, and the blessing of his unseen grace; a conscience ascertaining its own state by the Gospel. We need no miracle, my brethren; we need no supernatural, no extraordinary communications from God. If we feel our hearts

drawn towards heaven ; if we look only to Christ for salvation ; if our life bring forth the fruits of faith in humility and self-denial, in piety, holiness, deeds of justice, of mercy, and charity ; if we take delight and comfort in all the duties of religion, we may as safely build our humble, but faithful assurance of salvation, through the atoning merits of our great Redeemer, and the sanctifying influence of his Holy Spirit, as surely as though an angel were to call fire out of the rock to consume our sacrifice ; or the course of nature, like the dew on Gideon's fleece, were changed to confirm our faith. Enthusiasts may alarm the weak and timid Christian, who is not conscious of any individual assurance of salvation ; it is our duty, my brethren, to guard such against these delusions. Let not wild fantasies prevail over sound sense and genuine piety : let us try our faith and our lives by the test of God's written Word honestly ; and our verdict, pronounced at once in humility and confidence (humility, for we are still miserable sinners ; confidence, for Christ is mighty to save, and his promise cannot fail) our verdict will be received and approved in heaven.

We have time only for one more reflection. It is suggested by the war-shout of Israel, when Gideon led them to the discomfiture of their oppressors, and their own deliverance—"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Had the sword of Gideon not been the sword also of the Lord, it had been more powerless against the hosts of Midian than a broken reed. Had the sword of the Lord not been wielded by the hand of a man, the miraculous overthrow of the Midianites, as far as light is thrown on this subject in Scripture, would not have been effected, and Israel would have still groaned under their oppressors' rod. It is so, my brethren, in the Christian's warfare : the only safe watch-word for the disciple of Christ is this—"The grace of God, and the best exertions of man." The sword of Gideon, separate from the power and guidance of Jehovah, would not have been more powerless towards the liberation of Israel, (though, as we have said before, it would have been as impotent as a broken reed) not more powerless than our own efforts, without the grace of God, must be ineffectual in the salvation of our souls. God's will to save Israel would not more certainly have remained inoperative, without Israel's repentance, and prayer, and best exertions, than must God's will to save lost mankind be now assuredly exercised in vain towards us, unless we put forth our very best endeavours, in the name and in the strength of the Lord, towards the work of our own redemption. It is false doctrine, it is not Scriptural faith, which would represent our salvation as God's own work exclusively, and man as an irresponsible being. God's mercy alone, through Christ (blessed, for ever blessed, be his holy Name !) God's mercy alone, through Christ, is the cause of our salvation ; but faith, and hearty and steadfast obedience, are required on our part. By a failure in them, the gift of God—eternal life—will have been offered us in vain. But, my brethren, (and let us end with these comfortable reflections) if in spirit and in truth we embrace the Gospel—if, in its true meaning, we adopt as our heavenly-inspired watch-word, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon"—if we put our trust in God, as fully as though we had nothing to do ourselves ; and, at the same time, work so earnestly and so unremittingly, as if we had no grace of God to trust to at all ; then victory is ours, we shall be more than conquerors through Him who loved us, and washed us in his own blood. The Word of God commands us, as it did Gideon, to go forth in his might. We go forth to

our spiritual combat in the strength of the Lord God ; but go forth we must, and put forth all our strength, too, most heartily. " I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me," was the bold, but not too bold, triumphant exclamation of St. Paul : in humble confidence we may make the Apostle's words our own. Let the enemies of our souls be more in number and in power than the countless Midianites ; they will fall before the banner of the cross and our faith, as they did before the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.

And then, my brethren, our victory over sin and death, leads not to peace and rest, as Gideon's did for the children of Israel—for his life of forty years in Palestine : it will secure to our souls in the heavenly Jerusalem, peace, and rest, and joy with God, for ever and for ever.

## DILIGENCE IN SEEKING SALVATION.

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REV. H. W. MADDOCK, A.M. \*

STEPNEY NEW CHURCH, MARCH 22, 1835.

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"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."—HEBREWS, xii. 14, 15.

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THE great end for which we are required to hear and to receive God's holy Word, one principle object for which we are directed "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together," is, that we may learn what we must do to be saved. Understanding by "salvation" the happiness of that part of our nature which we believe is destined to survive these perishable bodies, and to live through endless ages, we cannot be engaged in any more important inquiry, than whence this salvation arises, and how it is to be secured.

It is not necessary, brethren, for me to go about to prove to you that we stand in need of salvation: I presume that you are well acquainted with that fundamental truth on which the whole scheme of the Gospel is built, that we are all by nature children of wrath, enemies of God, heirs of perdition. It is in deliverance from this state that the notion of salvation consists. Now that we, who were "enemies to God by wicked works," have been reconciled unto him—that our sins have been pardoned—that we are able to offer him an acceptable service—and that we are permitted to entertain the hope that, when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, we may dwell together with him in that presence which is fulness of joy; these privileges, the possession of which is comprehended in the term "salvation," are the result of the free, unmerited kindness and love of God. He, whose creatures we are, prompted by the low estate and the misery into which sin hath brought us, sent, in his own good time, his only begotten Son to visit us with his salvation, to bless us in turning us away from our iniquities. For us men, and for our salvation, that Son in whom his Father was always well-pleased—that Son who had been partaker from everlasting of the glory of the Father—laid aside that glory, and came down from heaven; that by assuming our nature, and suffering in it, mysteriously united to his own, the punishment we had deserved, he might make a full and complete satisfaction and atonement for sin. Without this atonement we had been still in our sins, and consequently under the wrath of God. The constant assertion of Scripture is, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission:" and the same Scriptures, in declaring that "the blood of bulls and

\* Farewell Sermon.



of goats cannot take away sin;" and that "no man may deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him;" prepare us to look for the perfect propitiation in that Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.

Now, without asking whether the object accomplished by this stupendous sacrifice, might not have been effected otherwise; but accepting the scriptural fact that "Christ bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" can we say that we had any claim to such an interposition on our behalf? We surely shall not presume to say, or to think, that we have. Is it not then to the grace and mercy of God, that our deliverance from sin and its consequences, by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, is owing? Our salvation is repeatedly attributed in the Scriptures to grace; in order, probably, that our sense of the goodness of God may be enhanced; and that those feelings of pride and self-righteousness, which the corrupted heart of man too readily conceives, may be suppressed. "By grace are ye saved," says St. Paul to the Ephesians: and the same Apostle, speaking of the state in which justification and peace are provided, represents it as "this grace wherein we stand." To the same effect is the well-known summary of the design of the Gospel, in the epistle to Titus: "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men."

I should be occupying your time too long were I to adduce all the passages in which Christ's salvation is spoken of as "the free gift of God," which confirm St. Paul's declaration, that we are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Asserting, then, unequivocally, that "salvation is of the Lord"—that as "it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves;" so hath he saved and called us, "not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace;" I would still say that this most precious gift of God, is not unconditional, but that we are required to do something to qualify us for participating in its benefits. For wherefore has this grace appeared, but to teach us "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world?" For what purpose has he given his Son to die for us, but that we who live "should not henceforth live to ourselves, but unto Him that died for us, and rose again?" For what end has the promise of the Spirit been given to all believers, but to assist their natural infirmities, and to enable them to become holy as He that hath called them is holy? In short the object of that dispensation which emanated from the love of God to his disobedient and perishing creatures, is, in the first place, to redeem them from the penalties of sin, and, in the second place, to renew them after the image of Him that created them. It is to no purpose that the first object has been accomplished, if the second be lost sight of. The grace of God, unless it has the effect of renewing those to whom it is communicated in the spirit of their minds, will not bring salvation: it is received in vain. That there is a danger "lest we may fall of the grace of God," is declared in the very language of the text, by describing that, from falling in which he warns us, as "the grace of God." The Apostle affirms that great principle for which he has so strenuously contended in his epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, that we are justified freely: while, by his inculcation of charity and holiness, he shows in what condition the grace of God may be expected to bring eternal salvation. For we may be formally adopted into

the family of Christ at baptism ; we may profess to believe in Christ : but unless, when we are baptized into Christ, we spiritually put on Christ ; unless we hold the faith in the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life ; our baptism and profession are of no avail.

I do not mean to disparage the importance and the efficacy of faith ; without it we must “ fail of the grace of God.” The answer given by the apostle Paul to the question of the jailor of Philippi, “ What must I do to be saved ? ” may be also addressed to every one of us : “ Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” If we would apply to ourselves the benefits of that atoning sacrifice of Christ, which is the result and the foundation of God’s grace to sinners, we must, with sincere acknowledgments of our own unholiness and inability to work out our own salvation, accept him as our Saviour, and believe in our hearts that He, the Eternal Son of God, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, was made man, was crucified, and died. This faith in the meritorious sacrifice of Christ, is the condition of that covenant of reconciliation which God has been pleased to enter into with sinful men ; without compliance with which, Christ will profit us nothing : for, “ he that believeth on him is not condemned ; but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

But this faith that is thus described as the essential condition of our acceptance with God, is not to be understood as dispensing with the necessity of repentance and obedience : the faith that justifieth, purifieth also. If we really believe that Christ died and rose again for us, we shall ourselves endeavour to die to sin, and to rise again unto righteousness. That the benefits which Christ has purchased by his death might be communicated to the world—that the conditions on which they may hope to inherit eternal life might be known unto men—that the necessity of making religion personally and practically influential, might be urged upon them—that, in short, they might not “ fail of the grace of God,” was the end and object for which the Christian ministry was ordained. It is ours, as “ workers together with God,” to remind and to “ beseech you, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.” We have not now, indeed, as the early preachers of the Gospel, to turn you “ from lying vanities to the living God : ” we have not to announce to you for the first time, as new tidings, your natural corruption and liability to death, and your redemption by the death of Christ : but we have to warn you with all diligence, that you rest not satisfied with knowing these “ first principles of the doctrine of Christ,” but that you “ go on unto perfection.” It is ours, in the work of our calling, to confirm men in the faith, to warn the careless and indifferent, to reclaim the wandering, to alarm (if possible) the profligate and impure, to convince the gainsayer, to speak peace to the desponding ; that thus the word of the Lord may have free course, and God be glorified by the increase of his church, and the maintenance of pure religion.

And the basis of the teaching of the minister of Christ must ever be the same. He must preach the doctrine of reconciliation through Christ crucified ; for although he has no longer to contend with the obstinacy of Jewish prejudice, or the self-conceit of Gentile philosophy, he will ever have to combat the

innate pride of the human heart; which, where it does not formally reject, yet studies studiously to detract from, the efficacy of the cross of Christ. Recollecting that woe is denounced against him if he preach not the Gospel; convinced by the declaration of Scripture, that there is "no other name given" save that of "Christ:" he asserts, with the great Apostle, that Christ crucified—however he may be to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness—however he may be undervalued by the indifferent, or degraded by the modern rationalist, is yet to them that believe "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." In the discharge of his ministry he studies by the display of man's natural enmity to God, and constant liability to eternal punishment, to evince the necessity and the value of a Redeemer. While, too, he inculcates the humiliating truth of man's inability of himself to do any thing pleasing or acceptable to God, he feels the importance of the doctrine of sanctification, and points out the methods by which the Holy Spirit of God may be induced to take up his abode in the heart of the believer; subduing the emotions of the old man, and making him a new creature devoted to God, in righteousness and true holiness. Knowing, too, the "terrors of the Lord," and that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," to receive our everlasting doom, according to the things done in the body, he fails not to remind the disobedient and profane, that indignation and wrath await every soul of man that continueth to do evil.

My Christian friends, I trust that in the course of my ministry among you, these important articles of Christian doctrine have not been overlooked. I trust that, however imperfectly, I have yet not handled the Word of God deceitfully; that I have not shunned, to the best of my ability, to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. The Christian minister who commences his ministry with a determination to know nothing, among those for whom he ministers, but "Jesus Christ, and him crucified"—that is, to make Christ the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of his preaching—is called upon at its close to exhort those who have been committed to his charge, to continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and not moved away from the hope of the Gospel. Christ, however, solemnly enjoined his apostles—and in them all succeeding ministers—to teach the people to observe and do all things whatsoever he commanded. Agreeably to this injunction, I have endeavoured to combine the enforcement of the precepts, with the exposition of the doctrines, of the Gospel; to render the great truths of our holy faith instrumental to the production of holiness, and pureness, and love. This is a branch of the ministerial office always important, always obligatory: and my own ministerial duties in this place cannot, I believe, be more profitably terminated, than in setting forth the necessity, and exhorting you to the cultivation, of that "holiness without which no man can see the Lord."

The end of all religion is to bring men to God. In effecting this the Christian religion alone has succeeded; for although it has concluded all men under sin, it only has exhibited God as "a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus." Now, every religion assuming that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity but with abhorrence, and that man is a being capable of paying obedience to a given law, must come to the conclusion that holiness is required of man. For

in what does holiness consist but in being like God? and how can any man be like God except by obedience to those laws which he has ordained for him to walk in?

The Gospel has made no alteration in this fundamental requirement of all religions. To those, indeed, who by reason of sin were aliens to God—that is, to all mankind—it has opened a fountain for the purification of all sin and uncleanness: but it has pronounced, in terms which cannot be misunderstood, that, without that holiness of heart and life which is enforced in the discourses of our Lord and his apostles, no man can, without presumption, expect to see the Lord. When, therefore, we preach the necessity of holiness as a condition of acceptance with God, we are building on the apostles and prophets: we are not diminishing the efficacy of Christ's atonement; for it is only the blood of our Lord, through faith in that blood, that can cleanse our consciences “from dead works to serve the living God.” It was to renew the holiness in which man had originally been created, but which by disobedience he had lost, that the glorious mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God was designed and accomplished. For what was it Christ lived—for what was it that he died; for what was the everlasting Gospel to be preached to the ends of the world; for what was the priesthood instituted, and the sacraments ordained; but that sinners might be made righteous—the unholy holy? If we would please God—if we would answer the end for which we were created—if we would live as the redeemed of the Lord—if we would not do despite unto the Spirit of grace—we must cultivate real practical holiness.

It is to this—as to the end of all religion, the design of all that our blessed Saviour did and suffered—that I now solemnly and earnestly exhort you. Let those who cast the Gospel behind their back, make it their chief study to obey the flesh and the lusts thereof: let them be content to mind only earthly things. But be not *ye* like-minded: knowing that your inheritance and your hope is there, let your tempers, your conversation, and your lives savour of heaven. To this end, believe in the Lord Jesus. I here speak of faith as the animating principle of religion: for it is in vain that the understanding assents to doctrines if the heart be not affected by them, since our actions arise from the united operation of the affections and the understanding. If, therefore, we would do right, we must so believe as to *act* upon our belief.

Let it not be imagined by any person (for I would anxiously acquit myself of such a suspicion) that in enforcing the duties of the Christian religion I have ever intended so to inculcate them as supposing them to be the meritorious cause of salvation. In conformity with the plain exposition of Scripture, in obedience to that interpretation of Scripture which is laid down in the formularies of our Church, I would maintain that “we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings.” I thankfully confess that Christ is the sole meritorious cause of man's salvation, and that faith is the instrument by which we apply his merits to ourselves. But I also believe that no faith can be instrumental in the application of those merits unaccompanied by obedience. The same lips in which was no guile, from which proceeded the gracious assurance, “He that believeth on me shall never die,” declared also, “If thou



wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." And these doctrines, which the Son of God hath joined, let no man presume to put asunder.

Let me, then, exhort you, while you disclaim all merit of your own, and confess yourselves with real humility to be miserable sinners, agreeably to that declaration of the Apostle, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he hath saved us," still to show yourselves meet to receive the riches of God's goodness by living as the Gospel requires us to live—"soberly, righteously, and godly." Be Christians, not only in name and in profession, but in deed and in truth. Conform yourselves to the precepts, and imitate the example, of Christ. Be punctual in the duties you more especially owe to God. Approach him in prayer through the mediation of his Son. Exercise yourselves in the study of his revealed will. Reverence his ordinances: despise not his Sabbaths. Seek to obtain from the Spirit illumination to your minds, and a right judgment in all things. Pray to him to warm your hearts, to elevate your devotions, to help your infirmities, to further your endeavours. Let the love and the gratitude you owe to God your Redeemer, make you zealous for his honour, which is despised by the ungodly and profane. Let it incite you to the desire of uniting yourselves more closely to him by participating of the sacrament of his body and of his blood.

And, while you endeavour to fill your hearts with the love of God and your Redeemer, let this love be manifested towards your fellow-creatures; for if any say, "I love God," and hate his brother, that man is a liar. Follow, then, peace with all men: think no evil of, speak no evil of, do no evil to, your neighbour. Let not strife or malice, unkindness or severity, sully the temper, and throw a shade over the lives of those who have received the Gospel of peace: and while Christian charity influences your temper, let it shine forth also in deeds of mercy and compassion to those whose unhappy lot it is to struggle with poverty and distress.

While, however, you forget not to display all those kind offices towards your brethren, which either Christian charity or Christian courtesy may dictate, be careful likewise to exercise a strict control over your own hearts, lest their ungoverned lusts should lead you into all manner of sin and impurity. Let not lasciviousness, drunkenness, or any riotous excess, be allowed to defile those bodies which have been consecrated as temples of the Holy Ghost. And, my brethren, let not your attention to the duties you owe to God, your neighbour, and yourselves, be postponed. Let not any article of your conduct that you feel to be offensive to God, injurious to your brethren, or destructive of your own soul's purity, remain uncondemned or unrenounced. On this, most frequent and earnest exhortations are especially necessary. We all—those at least who habitually partake of Christian ordinances—are aware of the great importance of "the one thing needful;" can all feel the force of the question, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" But we are all too apt, under the absorbing influence of present and worldly objects, to defer acting as our sober conviction would require us to act. My brethren, let us not, by thus trifling where life and death are at stake, put our souls in jeopardy. We are continually reminded, by a variety of events, that here we have no abiding place. We believe that the world passeth away, and the lusts

thereof; and that the time is approaching when “all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.”

My brethren, let these considerations excite us to “look diligently, lest any of us fail of the grace of God.” The goodness of God calleth us continually to repentance: let us see that we refuse not him that calleth. God’s Spirit will not always strive with us. If in obstinacy and indifference we reject his gracious invitations, death will at last overtake us; and we shall have to encounter the judgment of a God whose mercies we have exhausted, and whose wrath we have wilfully invoked. Now, therefore, my brethren, let us make haste to make our peace with God; for “*now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation.”

I should now, perhaps, conclude: but ere I do so, I hope I may be permitted to say, that I feel thankful to God for having enabled me to discharge, as I trust, not unprofitably, the duties of the Christian ministry. I hope the circumstances under which this discourse is delivered will be an excuse for what otherwise I should not have indulged in—personal reference to myself. To the many imperfections with which the discharge of my ministerial duties has been accompanied, I am not insensible: but I may venture to say, that I have not attempted wilfully to mislead, nor to impose any thing upon your consciences which Scripture authorizes not, nor to conceal any thing which it requires; but have tried, in all godly sincerity, to set forth among you the doctrine of Christ crucified. And if, through such humble instrumentality, the seeds of Christian faith have been scattered amongst you, may He who alone can give the increase, cause them to bring forth fruit unto holiness, that so the end may be everlasting life. Nor—although it would ill become the sanctity of this place to utter from it the language of worldly compliment—should I do justice to my own feelings, were I not to express the satisfaction I have felt from the manner in which my ministry has been received amongst you; were I not to acknowledge that I have uniformly experienced respect and kindness from all with whom I have been brought into contact. Whatever, brethren, may be my future lot, my connexion with this place will ever be amongst my most grateful recollections. That Almighty God may bless you with all temporal and spiritual blessings, is my earnest prayer. That you may not fail of those blessings, that you may enjoy the favour of God here and hereafter, and become partakers of the inheritance of the purchased possession; let me once more affectionately exhort you not to be content with the name of Christian, but to endeavour heartily to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let me exhort you, as you wish to secure to yourselves the peace and happiness of heaven, to follow peace with all men, and purify yourselves even as Christ the Lord is pure.

Finally, brethren—to cite the beautiful language of the Apostle—“Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things.”

“ And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.” And “ may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord: to whom be glory for ever and ever.” Amen.

## THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THE WORD OF THE LORD IN THE DAY OF EVIL.

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REV. W. JAY.

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“The word of the Lord was precious in those days.”—1 SAMUEL, iii. 1.

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“THERE never was,” said the late Emperor Napoleon—“There never was a very excellent, nor a very extraordinary character, that did not owe much to his mother.” This remark may be particularly exemplified with regard to religious distinctions. Many of you know the acknowledgments of Newton, and Cecil, and many others in our own times. We know nothing of the paternal relation of Timothy; but we read of the unfeigned faith which dwelt in his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice, and in him also. How David’s memory lingers about this connexion: how tenderly he pleads it with his God! “I am the son of thine handmaid;” “Save the son of thine handmaid.”

And the same may be said of Hannah and Samuel. We consider Samuel as one of the finest characters recorded in all history. Here we have his birth, his dedication to God, his employment in the temple, and his call to the prophetic office: for while he was yet but a child, dressed in a linen ephod, and ministering before the Lord, he received in the night a summons to deliver an awful message, involving the destruction of the whole house of Eli. You may peruse the details at your leisure; we have now only to notice the character of the period in which the vision came. The days were evil: profligacy had invaded the sanctuary of God; the priestly office was prostituted to the vilest purposes of sensuality, so that men despised and abhorred the offering of the Lord. “And the word of the Lord was precious in those days:” there was no “vision;” that is, there was no acknowledged prophet, accustomed to receive divine communications, to whom the people might stately and publicly repair for instruction.

Let us take occasion, from the few words we have selected, to enlarge, this evening, upon three things. The word of the Lord: the preciousness of that word: and the season of that preciousness. Consider what we say; and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

First, **THE WORD OF THE LORD.** To this high honour the Bible professes to aspire: it claims to be nothing less than the word of the Lord; and we say at once on its behalf, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;” and “holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” I hope none of you, in this large assembly, have rendered it desirable or necessary to deny this truth. For this is the unhappy process with many; they first make the



Bible their enemy, and then they feel interested in opposing it. They hate it, because it doth not prophesy good concerning them, but evil. The late Mr Wilberforce told me, that some years ago, when he was passing through Dorchester, during the confinement there of Carlile, he went to see him in prison, and endeavoured to engage him in a conversation upon the Scriptures; but he refused: he said he had made up his mind, and did not wish it to be perplexed again: and, pointing to the Bible in the hands of his visitor, he said in an awful manner, "How, Sir, can you suppose that I can like that book; for if it be true I am undone for ever." "No," said the divine philanthropist; "this is not the necessary consequence, and it need not be; that book excludes none from hope who will seek salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we may live together with him."

Infidelity should be considered morally always, rather than intellectually; it is absurd to suppose that it results from a want of evidence. If there were only a probability, or even a possibility, of the Scripture being true, such are the awful consequences depending upon its rejection, and since no injury can arise from confiding in it, and much good must ensue from its adoption, reason itself requires that we should embrace it. But how many in number, and how convincing, are the proofs in its favour, compared with the objections alleged against it? We say objections; for infidelity only abounds with objections. Now it is the easiest thing in the world to object: specious objections may be advanced against a truth, however firmly established: and it is a very fine remark of Paley, that "we should never suffer what we know, to be disturbed by what we do not know." Why do not infidels undertake to answer Grotius, or Lardner, or Leslie, or Doddridge, or Paley, or Watson? Have they ever done this, have they ever attempted this, in one single instance?

I now go back to the beginning of the Gospel; and there we find two classes of persons—Jews and Gentiles—neither of which, forsooth, can find evidence enough to believe it. The Jews—O they could not believe that Jesus was Messiah; though they stood by and saw him open the eyes of the blind, and raise the dead, by a single word, and in a moment. But they could believe the relations of their Elders, and the stories of their Rabbies—the greatest impositions that ever yet were invented on human credulity. Then take the Greeks: "O," said they, "how absurd it is for persons to believe in, and adore as a God, one who suffered and died on the cross." At the very same time, you will observe, they acknowledged, they adored as gods, beings whose infamous lusts and passions they allowed; as if sinning was less incompatible with divinity than suffering. Whether, therefore, they refused to believe from a want of evidence, judge ye.

It is the same now; the evidence ventured upon by men as to their everlasting all, is such as they would be ashamed to act upon in the lowest concerns of life. The faith of the Christian! What does the Christian *believe*, compared with the man who believes that the Scriptures are a cunningly-devised fable? It is to him we plainly apply the exclamation, "O man, great is thy faith." We indeed believe difficulties; but he believes absurdities: we believe mysteries; but he swallows absolute impossibilities. O Christian, your faith does not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the word of God: yet the wisdom of man has always been on your side. Down to this very hour infidelity has not pro-

duced one first-rate scholar or genius. What are the names to be found in the lists of our adversaries, to weigh against your Newtons, your Boyles, your Bacons, your Lockes, your Miltons, your Joneses, and numbers more? You Christians can appeal to prophecies, many of which have been accomplished, and many of which are now fulfilling. You can appeal to miracles, numerous, performed in public, and in the presence of those who would have detected the imposture, if there had been any. You can appeal to the character of the penmen. And here you may say to the Deist, "Were these penmen good men or bad men? You can take your choice of the alternatives, for either one will equally support our argument. If you say they were good men, how came good men to tell lies, and profess that they had received a commission which they never had received, and to declare 'Thus saith the Lord,' when the Lord had not spoken? If you assert them to be bad men, how came bad men to enforce all holy tempers and conversations, and to censure and condemn themselves for ever in every line they wrote?"

Take up the Bible now, and examine it internally—is it not worthy of God? Upon the same principle that when I survey the works of creation I exclaim, "This is the finger of God;" so when I peruse the Scriptures, I feel the impress of the divine agency: I am perfectly sure, that whoever was the author of the Book, he was a holy being, he was a wise being, he was a benevolent being: I am sure he knew me perfectly, and was concerned for my welfare. The argument arising from the establishment and spread of the Gospel in the world, often engages your attention, and we have recently referred to it with the concession—that success alone does not constitute a proof of the divinity of a cause. For then where should we be with regard to Mahometanism and Popery? But here, we contend, such is the nature of the case, and the inadequacy of the means employed, that we must have recourse to a divine interposition. Who were the agents engaged? A number of fishermen, without power to compel, without riches to bribe, without philosophy to perplex, without eloquence to persuade. And what had they to overcome? The decrees of emperors, the persecutions of magistrates, the subtlety of philosophers, the craftiness and covetousness of priests, the profligacy of the common multitude. And what had they to enforce the success of those things which they had to declare? Doctrines that seemed incredible to human reason; and they were believed. They enforced duties which were repulsive to every natural disposition; and they were obeyed. They acknowledged that sufferings and death would immediately attend the adoption of their sentiments; and they were instantly adopted: and not by a few, but by men of all descriptions; men who were distinguished by every kind of moral excellence, who were examples of all good works.

It cannot be expected that we should be able to do full justice to the evidences, external or internal, of the Gospel, in a branch of a single sermon; on the other hand, I hope none of you will consider what we have advanced as unnecessary, when you consider to what our youth, the hope of our churches and our country, are continually exposed now; and when you reflect that the subject can only impress us according to our impressions of the nature of its claims. If we receive the Gospel as human, we shall naturally regard it humanly: if we receive it as divine, we shall regard it divinely. It was thus the Thessalonians received it; and the Apostle acknowledges the consequence. "Ye received,"

says he, "the word of us, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

Let us notice, secondly, ITS PRECIOUSNESS. "Precious" means valuable; costly; something of great worth and importance. You will observe the preciousness of a thing is very distinguishable from the truth of it, in the former argument. Nothing can indeed be valuable and important that is not true; but a thing may be true without being valuable and important. But here both these are conjoined—the veracity and the excellency—according to the word of the Apostle, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." This may be inferred, not only from the Author, but the design. What is the design now of the word of God, but the restoration of man from all the effects of moral evil, and placing him in a condition superior to that in which he was originally created? "These things are written," says the Apostle, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Here the mighty questions are answered, "What must I do to be saved?" "How shall I come before the Lord, and bow before the High God?" The most precious book in the world to me ought to be that which contains "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord:" and this volume does contain it. We are commanded to search the Scriptures, for in them we think we have eternal life, and they are they that testify of him. The heathens knew something of the fall; they must have felt the effects of it, in the troubles of life, in the uneasiness of conscience, in the disorder of their passions, in the dread of futurity, and in what the Apostle calls, their "subjection all their life to bondage through fear of death." We know that they did try to obtain relief; but they knew nothing of the balm in Gilead, and the Physician there: they were without Christ, and therefore they were without hope and without God with them in the world.

But, "to us is the word of this salvation sent." Now observe how David eulogizes it: "Thou hast magnified," says he, "thy word above all thy name." That is, above all other modes of manifesting himself: for God has displayed himself in various other ways. He has shown much of his power and his wisdom in the constitution of nature, and in the dispensations of his providence; yea, and much of his goodness too. Some contend, too, that he has shewn enough of his goodness there to answer all the purposes of religion; but very unjustly: for the display of his goodness there, you will observe, is intermingled with other effects, that more than neutralize it. You thus witness, not only zephyrs, but hurricanes; not only health, but sickness; not only ease, but cholera; not only life, but death. Where are you now? These awful appearances will always produce more fear in the guilty (and every mind is conscious of guilt) than the pleasing appearances will ever have power to produce hope.

We see that this accords with the history of idolatry and superstition in every age of the world; it has not only been absurd and foolish, but also cruel and bloody: and the character altogether upon which man must return to God as a sinner, to obtain pardon and peace, the only view we can have of God that will give us confidence, and bring us to himself—namely, as the Father of mercies, and God of all grace, as ready to forgive, as engaged to renew and sanctify us



—this is only to be seen in the face of Jesus Christ. I have never met with one of our missionaries who has been abroad, without asking whether, while he was among the heathen, he ever perceived any thing in any of them like confidence in, or attachment to, the idols they adore? He has immediately replied, “Never; they only worship them from fear; and therefore they dislike to think of death. And this was an advantage in their conversion; for as soon as ever they were persuaded that they were safe from their anger, they would instantly tumble them into the sea, or cast them to the moles and bats, or burn them in the fire.”

O how precious is one declaration of this book! Read the testimony of John: “We have known and believed the love he hath to us; God is love: and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” How precious is it to have a standard of doctrine with regard to our belief; so that if we feel perplexities—and perplexities there needs will be on such a subject—we may call in the judgment of God the Father himself. How satisfactory is it to have a rule of duty with regard to conduct. How wretched we must feel if we had been left to conjecture what God would have us to do, and how he would have us to walk. But this is not our case; he hath shewn us what is good; he has told us what he requires of us; he has furnished us with information, and this information is in proportion to the importance of the thing. As to matters of moment, here every thing is so legibly inscribed, that he may run that reads it. Where information is necessary to us, there the light of day is thrown upon the subject: where additional information would only amuse us, and draw us off from the one thing needful, there the Scripture becomes silent as death, and dark as the grave. And is not this an excellency? Thus the Bible teaches us by what it conceals, as well as by what it reveals: just as Lord Bacon observes, “The shade of the sun on the sun-dial, serves to show the hour as well as the sunshine.” And how advantageous is it to have, also, a manual of piety, a *vade mecum* of devotion, with every thing comprised in it that is necessary to life, and in so small a compass that we can carry it conveniently along with us. “Ah,” says Solomon, “take this book; bind it about thy neck; write it upon the tablet of thy heart: that where thou goest it may lead thee, and when thou sleepest it may keep thee, and when thou walkest it may talk with thee.”

We must not, before we dismiss this part of our subject, overlook its influence and efficacy. We do not mean now with regard to the illumination of the mind, or the relief of the pardoned conscience, or the setting of the man's poor heart at rest, so that he shall no longer run up and down this wide world, crying, “Who will shew us any good?” but we refer now to his moral transformation. “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.” And our Saviour, therefore, said unto the Jews, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” We see that it did this on its original promulgation. We see that, though Plato complained that he could not prevail upon the inhabitants of a single village to walk according to his maxims and rules, the Fishermen of Galilee never complained so. Did not Corinth refuse? No. Did not Rome? No. Did not Thessalonica? No. Did not Ephesus? No. Did not all these places? No. The kingdom of God was not in word, but in power. They received the word; they became free from sin, and became the servants of God, had their fruit unto



holiness, and the end everlasting life. And the same effects arise from the same doctrines now. For God's grace and God's truth always go together: wherever the Gospel is received, it comes not in word only, but, as the Apostle says, both "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." The drunkard becomes sober; the swearer learns to fear an oath; the man who lived in chambering and wantonness, no longer follows the desires of the flesh; the proud are humbled; the avaricious become liberal; and they who walked by sight walk by faith. "We speak that we do know, and testify that which we have seen."

And we must also observe the value of the Scriptures, as it appears, not only when personally, but relatively considered. You will observe, that where it is not available to renew, it restrains: where it does not sanctify, it civilizes. The Jews had the Oracles of God committed to them; this it was which humanized them. Ahab, and his predecessors, were far from being good men; and yet, you see, they had obtained the character, in all the surrounding nations, of merciful men: "The kings of Israel are merciful kings:" and so they were comparatively. You might have gone from one end of the pagan world to the other, and not have seen a hospital or a poor-house. What is it that, more than any thing else, has served to soften the fierceness of the passions, and correct the savageness of the manners of the multitude? What is it that will finally beat the sword into the plough-share, the spear into the pruning-hook, and put an end to war? What is it that has already softened its horrors so? If after a battle now prisoners were ever put to death in cold blood, if the meanest captive after an action now were to be maltreated, the earth would ring from one end to the other with the horror. What is it that will finally banish slavery? (the rectitude of which, by the way, none of the liberals of Rome and Greece ever questioned): yea, what is it that *has* abolished it, in the noblest and mightiest empire under heaven? I am persuaded, "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." What is it that has reduced marriage to its original institution, and by excluding polygamy and divorce, at once has reduced it to a state of purity, and peace, and happiness? And what is it that has so raised the tone of morals amongst us, that the very vices which the most admired characters of antiquity practised, and dared to avow themselves, now drive a man from the very dregs of society? What is it that makes us revere the memory of a Howard or a Wilberforce, because they pitied and relieved the distressed?

How precious should the Scriptures be that have closed so many avenues of wretchedness, and opened so many scenes to them of comfort. I would only ask any candid individual, What now would be the state of every family, and every nation, if the precepts of this book were universally obeyed, and the spirit of this book was universally felt? Why our earth would be turned into a paradise. The few words of the apostle, "By love serve one another," were they enthroned in every heart, soon the wilderness and solitary place would be made glad, and the desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose.

Thirdly, let us consider THE SEASON OF ITS PRECIOUSNESS. It would be precious in itself, if no one ever regarded it: just as the jewel is equally valuable though the swine trample it under its hoofs. But it is with the word as it is with the Author of it; "to them that believe *he* is precious;" and to them that

believe it is precious. Good men have always been fond, (shall I say,) *fond* of the Word of God. Job said, "I esteem the words of thy mouth more than any necessary food." David says, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold:" he gives it as the character of the godly man, that "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." "I prefer," says the Hon. Mr. Boyle, "one sprig of the tree of life to a whole wood of bay." You may meet with a great number of such expressions in "Simpson's Plea for Religion."

But it would seem from our text, that there are seasons in which the word of the Lord is particularly precious. "The word of the Lord was particularly precious in *those days*." What days? First the *days of destitution*. Such were the days of Samuel: this was the case also in after times with the church, when they said, "We see not any signs: there is no more any prophet; neither is there among us, any that knoweth how long." This was implied in the prophecy, "The Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction; yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." It is expressed in the threatening, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." Josiah had but once seen a copy of the law in his life; but a man who was employed to cleanse the temple found one, and it was soon carried to him, and the young prince ordered it to be read, and wept and wept again. How precious were the Scriptures before their translation; how many were there to whom the sacred treasure was inaccessible. Suppose now the word of God was remaining in the original Hebrew and Greek, what would it then be to you? Why, it would be like a spring shut up, a fountain sealed; like so many fine paintings hung up in a dark room. "The word of the Lord was precious in those days;" and therefore upon the completion of Luther's translation, an annual feast was instituted, which was called "The Feast of the Translation." And after its translation how precious was it, owing to the trouble and expense of transcription, before the invention of the art of printing. How precious was it in the days of Henry the Eighth; for though it was then in print, this detestable tyrant issued an order, that it should not be read by any children, or apprentices, or husbandmen, or mechanics, or women. In the days of Queen Mary the use of it was absolutely prohibited: we read of one farmer who gave a whole load of hay for a single leaf of one of the epistles. "The word of the Lord was precious in those days." When Elizabeth ascended the throne, the prisons resigned their victims; yet she received a petition, very numerous and respectably signed, beseeching her to release four very worthy and honest men, who were still in confinement, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. When she passed through Cheapside, the citizens presented her with a New Testament; she kissed it, and pressing it to her bosom, said, "This shall be the rule of my government." Yet for a considerable time the word of God was so scarce, that a large Bible was ordered to be chained to a ledge in the aisle of every parish church; and there the

common people, before and after service, pressed to read it over each other's shoulders, as the earth in a drought drinks in the rain. In a later, and an unhappy age, two thousand men, of whom the world was not worthy, suffered for conscience' sake, and were deprived of their livings. It is true that the Scriptures continued still in circulation, but they who preached them published them no longer, and the people could no longer hear from them the joyful sound, unless by stealth, and in concealment, and at night. "The word of the Lord was precious in those days."

I remember many years ago going over a considerable part of Wales, and I found that the word of God was so scarce in their own language, that it was no uncommon thing for several families to possess one Bible as the common joint property; and each family had the use and the reading of it for a week or a month successively; and I dare say they made a very good use of it. "The word of the Lord was precious in those days." Nothing, I think, can be more affecting, than the account Mr. Charles, of Bala, gives of the arrival—the first arrival—of the Scriptures, from the British and Foreign Bible Society—the noblest institution that has been established since the apostolic days. He tells us, that when the people found that the vehicle laden with Bibles and Testaments, was drawing nigh, they went out in a body, withdrew the horses, and drew the vehicle themselves into the market-place, where the Bibles and Testaments were to be distributed. What a scene was this! I declare before God, I would rather have witnessed such a scene than a Roman triumph. We have seen heroes whose laurels have been drenched in blood; we have seen parliamentary hypocrites, in the kindness of their youth, and the love of their espousals, drawn along by human animals: but here was the Lamb of God; here was the Saviour of the world, drawn in triumph! We are reminded by this circumstance of something that happened at Jerusalem, when the multitude that went before, and the multitude that followed after, cried, "Hosannah, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." So precious was the word of God, that in a few hours the whole carriage load of Bibles was disposed of. The mechanic took the book along with him into his shop, to dip into it at his leisure: the rustic took it to the field, to soften his toil, and sweeten his homely meeting: the children (blessed be God for Sunday Schools, for they had been prepared by these for reading the Scriptures) the children read the book to their parents, and the aged man shook his hoary locks for joy.

There may be something like these days of destitution existing in some instances now: they may be produced by accidents, by diseases, by deafnesses, and so on. One is deaf, so that he cannot hear the word; another is blind, so that he cannot see. I remember, some years ago, a farmer in the country, a very pious man, he was advancing in years, and his eyes were growing dim: I often saw him reading the Scriptures at his window, and often sitting at his door, and he seemed to be musing as well as reading; he seemed to be committing it to memory: and when I asked him, I found this was the case: "O," said he, "I am making provision for a dark day, that when I can no longer read, in the multitude of my thoughts I shall have comfort left to my soul."

My dear hearers, we all know best the value of a thing by the want of it. A wife may not be undervalued, and yet the importance attached to that relationship is not duly felt until the delight of our eyes is removed by a stroke,

and the body is no longer seen moving about, in all the decencies and delights of domestic life: in the garden, and at the table, her seat is empty. Who values health so much as the man who has been made to possess months of vanity, and had wearisome nights appointed him; "when the soul refuses dainty meat, and his life draws near to the destroyers?" You children do value your mother; but you will value her more when she is withdrawn, and in vain you look after the bosom that has been the asylum of your course. Then you will enter into the meaning of David's words—"As one that mourneth for his mother."

"The word of the Lord was precious in those days." What days? The days of *conviction*. You remember, Christians, such seasons: you remember the wormwood and the gall: you remember how, by some Scripture, or by some sermon, or by some providence, your carnal heart was broken up, and conscience, which had been a slave, grew into the majesty of a judge, and summoned you to his bar. You have felt that your case was desperate as to yourselves, that it was beyond the reach of men and angels. And who told you that there was hope in Israel concerning this thing? You say,

" 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace that fear removed.  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!"

If you were sick unto death, and you saw a number of books in a room upon a table where you were seated, and you should ask, "What are these?" and a person should say, "O, one of them treats of your very disorder, and announces a remedy for it that was never received in vain." "O," you would say, "bring that book here; read that book to me; that is the most precious book for me." How did the Bible fill your minds, awakened and enlightened, at first! O, how above every other book were the Scriptures regarded: how precious was the word of the Lord then: how often your tear dropped upon the page then: how you delighted to hear the word: how you numbered the days and the hours before you repaired to the house of God to hear the words of eternal life!

"The word of the Lord was precious in those days." What days? The days of *affliction*. Who is free from affliction? "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." Who is free from it even in this assembly? Is he free who is saying, "My purposes are broken, even the thoughts of my heart?" Is he free who, bereaved of his connexions, is saying, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness?" Is he free whose eye rests upon the shadow of death, and, under the influence of a noisome disease, is saying, "I shall behold man no more?" With the inhabitants of the earth in such days what is precious? Is not the word of God? Ask David, an old and a great sufferer: "Ah," says he, "unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction. This is my comfort in my affliction—thy word has quickened me." The Scripture is never so precious as it is in the hour of trouble: I have been there; I am there. This blessed Book says, as its Author did, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but in me ye shall have peace." It assures us that nothing occurs by chance, that all is the act of heavenly arrangement—the arrangement of our Father and our Friend: that all will be well, for that all is well now: that all our woes and all our mercies tend—that all things work together, for good to them that love God. "O,"



said Bolingbroke under his affliction, "my philosophy forsakes me in my affliction." But did Sir Philip Sidney's philosophy forsake him, when, after a battle, he having to undergo a dreadful operation, said to the surgeon, "Sir, you are come to a poor timid creature in himself; but to one who, by the grace of God, is raised above his own weakness: and therefore, do not dishonour your art in sparing the patient?" Did the philosophy of the Church forsake her, when she said, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation?"

I do not know how others feel, but I am never more struck with any thing than with the *cruelty* of infidels. Here are persons that this Book must comfort, or nothing can do it; and yet these wretches would rob them as sufferers of this only comfort. The afflicted man goes to the house of God, and he finds God, in his affliction, to be a refuge; these wretches would pull down that refuge, and leave him without an asylum, and his poor head bare to the pelting of the pitiless storm. The widow begins to hope when she reads, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them; and let thy widows trust in me:" the wretched infidel comes, and dashes away this only cup of consolation from her parched lips. Never persecute infidels; leave them to that God whose unspeakable gift they despise. Give not your countenance to them; rather consider them as robbers and murderers, and robbers and murderers of the worst kind. Do not consider them friends to liberty: they friends to liberty, who would banish the Bible that is the charter of our everlasting privileges—that Gospel that makes us free indeed! They friends to freedom! Yes, to their own. As Milton says:

"They bawl for freedom in a senseless mood,  
But still are slaves where truth would set them free.  
Licence they want who cry for liberty,  
For who loves freedom must himself be free."

"The word of the Lord was precious in those days." What days? *Dying days*. These you have not experienced; but you must experience them. What was it that enlightened and comforted so many, while they were passing through the valley of the shadow of death? They had hope in their end. What inspired this hope? The blessed Gospel of our salvation. What taught them to sing, "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ?" What was it that taught them that to die was gain; that the enemy was transformed into their best friend? What, but the Scriptures of truth? I was one day called in, to see a poor man on his dying bed; and he began, the moment I entered the room, to address me in these words: "Sir," said he, "I have a long journey before me, and I don't know one step of the way." Hubbes of Malmesbury, when he was dying, said, "I leave my body to the grave, and my soul to the great Perhaps. I am taking," says he, "a step in the dark." This was not the worst of it; he was not only taking a step *in* the dark, but a step *into* the dark. Cowper, in dying, said, "I take a step in the dark, but not a step into

the dark ;" but a step into perfect and endless day, where the sun shall no more go down, nor the moon withdraw her shining ; but God would be his everlasting light, and the days of his mourning would be ended.

I really ought to apologize to you, my Christian friends, for detaining you so long. When I came up to London on this short visit, I determined that I would endeavour to preach short. I began well, but was hindered. However, I often remind my young friends, that I did not err in this way originally. When I began my ministry, I said there was one excellency within my reach, and I determined I would avail myself of this, namely, brevity ; and for years I seldom preached much more than half an hour. Some of you, I dare say, will recollect this was the case when I came to occupy this pulpit first, now forty-seven years ago. I was then a youth about nineteen years of age. Where am I now ? I hardly know. The minister is growing old ; his matter is grown under his hand : he has seen thousands hanging upon his lips ; and as he grows in years, he knows that his opportunities of addressing you must be diminished : he has been anxious to fasten the word as a nail in a sure place ; and, therefore, he has struck the head of it again, and again, and again, in order to drive it in : but the matter must now be resigned.

And what arises from the whole of this discourse ? Why that we should all bless God for our Bibles—for a Bible inspired, for a Bible preserved, for a Bible translated, for a Bible printed, for a Bible brought within the reach of all ; a Bible published, a Bible explained, and a Bible applied to the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. And then while we bless God for the inestimable privilege ourselves, let us pity those who are destitute of it. Let us pray—and let us shew by our exertions and sacrifices that our prayers are fervent, or at least sincere—"Let thy way be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations."

## REBUILDING OF THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM

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REV. J. W. CUNNINGHAM, A.M

ST. PHILIP'S CHURCH, CLERKENWELL, MARCH 15, 1835 \*.

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“So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.”—NEHEMIAH, iv. 6.

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It will be perceived at once, that these words have been chosen with a distinct reference to the subject which has called us together to-night. I have been brought into your presence, Christian brethren, for the express purpose, however unworthy of the office, of endeavouring to commend to the affection and sympathies of this congregation, the religious interests of this particular district, and the sustenance of that edifice of religion, in which, through the providence of God, we are assembled together to-night. I believe there is no reason that I should particularly press on the members of this congregation the duty of so sustaining this edifice, because “the people had a mind to work;” and an especial blessing has rested upon their endeavours. But in as far as God shall enable me, I will endeavour to sustain and cherish that spirit: for which purpose I have chosen, from the book of Nehemiah, an account of the labours of the people, after their return from their captivity, in rebuilding the walls of the holy city. It appears to me that these chapters, very interesting in themselves, will supply certain suggestions which, through God's infinite blessing, may be profitable to the persons hearing. May God, of his infinite mercy, be pleased to bless the simple remarks, which it will be my endeavour to offer.

I would wish to direct your attention, in the first place, to the persons by whom the work was mainly performed; and, secondly, to the spirit in which, under God's blessing, it was accomplished.

Consider, in the first place, THE PERSONS BY WHOM THIS WORK OF REBUILDING THE WALLS OF THE HOLY CITY IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN PERFORMED.

The class of persons first named as labourers in this great work are *the priests*. “Then,” it is said, “Eliashib, the high priest, rose up with his brethren *the priests*, and they builded the sheep-gates; they sanctified it and set up the doors of it; even unto the towers of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel.” In this case the work began—the work being especially connected with religion, leading to the rebuilding of the temple—the work began as it

\* For the support of the funds of the Church.

always ought, with the ministers of religion. Nothing can threaten deeper ruin to the interests of religion and morals, than when those, whose lips ought to keep knowledge, and whose spirit and conduct ought ever especially to reflect the image of the Master they profess to serve—when these fall behind in the great work of building up the church of the Redeemer. The corruptions of the priesthood in every age of the world, have supplied a sort of guage of the degeneracy and corruptions of the people. If the priests have been bad, the people have been worse. The worst state of the Jewish church, was when “the prophets prophesied falsely,” as it is said by Jeremiah, and “the people loved to have it so.”

On the contrary, brethren, nothing can promise better for the interests of a country and of the church, than when the priesthood, awakened in conscience, or touched in heart by the Spirit of the living God, awake from their slumbers, and pour their whole soul into the work of general and personal improvement. It was in the first and best ages of the English Church—and I feel it right to say, though at the risk of being thought to speak too favourably of my own order—that perhaps there never was a period in the history of our national church, in which there was a larger, or perhaps so large, a body of ministers honestly devoted to the work of the Lord: I mean men (for what other men are of any value?)—men that preach the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in truth and sincerity; men that love to own a Saviour, and to commend the Gospel, the whole Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel, to the consciences and hearts of their hearers. No doubt we have many loiterers in the vineyard; many satisfied rather to gather the grape than to cultivate the soil. We have those, it is to be feared, who do the work of the Lord deceitfully, or carelessly, or not at all. We have some whose carelessness, or levity, or bigotry, are amongst the worst curses of the church and the country. There will be tares among the wheat in the present state of the church. There was a Judas amongst the twelve apostles; and there were large multitudes more, in those early days of religion, that were faithless to their great undertaking.

On the contrary, I may venture to say, no man who has looked carefully into the history and circumstances of his country can have failed, as I think, to be struck with the increase of holy and zealous ministers; of men, as I hope, determined to know nothing among their countrymen but Jesus Christ, and him crucified; of men whose first and last wish it is to glorify Him who has bought them with his own blood. May God multiply the number; and may your prayers, Christian brethren, ascend to the throne of grace from day to day, that God will supply his church with such men; that we may always hear the voice behind, say, “Woe unto them that preach not the Gospel!” and that we may be faithful to our high, and holy, and heavenly calling.

The priests, in this particular instance, are said to have builded and sanctified the sheep-gate. This is said to have been the gate by which the sacrifices were brought into the city: and if so, they began by looking carefully to that which respected their own office: an example worthy imitation. Our first duty is to trim our own lamps; to take care of our own oil; to prepare the right sacrifices of the Lord; and especially to plead the great Sacrifice of Almighty God that taketh away the sins of the world; to make mention of His righteousness only;



to endeavour to make Christ precious to all, and to lay every one of you in the bosom of your Saviour and of your God.

It is said in the fifth verse of the third chapter that "the Tekoites repaired, but their nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord." It is the only class of nobles, or persons of very high rank and property in the tribe, who appear to have shrunk from the general duty; the other nobles, it is mentioned more than once, were faithful to their work. And happy, brethren, were it for the public interests, that this offence were confined to a few of the higher orders. Scarcely any thing can contribute more to the safety and value of a work of religious reform, or of any endeavour to build up the church of Christ, visible or invisible, than when our proper leaders really take the lead, and fill the place which Providence assigns them. Unless they bow their necks to the work, they may soon have to stoop to a heavier yoke, a more intolerable burden. Such cannot make a greater mistake than in imagining, that it is not their highest interest to sustain the work of God in their country.

It is stated in several of the verses of the third chapter, that *the rulers* were active in the work: and this, no doubt, greatly contributed to the success of the undertaking. It is useful to measure the degree of influence which the higher orders of every country exercise over the lower. Are *you* a person of influence—of property? Are you a father, or a master, or a teacher, or a guardian of others? Remember that in proportion to your power is your responsibility. Bow your neck to that work. Endeavour, as far as God shall enable you, to employ every faculty put into your hands to the glory of the Great Giver.

It is said in the twelfth verse of the third chapter that the *daughters of Shallum* were fellow-labourers in the work. And thus St. Paul speaks of "devout women who laboured with him in the Gospel." And it is one of the characteristics of our own age, and a very important one, that half the funds of the numerous societies for the extension of religion are raised by women: they are to a great extent the builders and constructors of schools, the circulators of Bibles, the senders of missions: they assist to light the spark, and supply the fuel, of the fire which, I venture to hope, is destined to burn out the plague-spot of corruption and misery from our guilty country. What can be more lovely in itself, and what could afford better security for public prosperity and domestic joy, than to see women casting all their natural or acquired influence into the great scale; and escaping from the nonsense, and the dissipation, and the follies of life, to live for the glory of their crucified Lord; bringing to the aid of religion and benevolence all that wins the heart, and constrains the conduct, of the great multitude around them. The Gospel has done much for women, and women ought to endeavour to do much for the Gospel. Women in the first and best ages of the Church were the last at the cross, and the first at the grave. May it still be their characteristic that they love their Lord; that they rejoice to bathe his feet with the tears of penitential sorrow; that they delight to pour on his head the precious ointment of grateful charity—of simple, holy, devoted, affectionate services, lives, and conversations; to the glory of that dear Master who has loved them, and shed his precious blood for them.

Of some persons it is said, in several of the verses of this chapter, that they repaired "over against their own houses:" and, says an old writer, in somewhat quaint, but very characteristic language, "If every one would sweep before his own door, the street would be clean. If every one will mend himself, we shall all be mended." It is said of others of these labourers, that, when they had done their own work they helped their fellows. How valuable is this as an example to ourselves! Dear brethren, selfishness is the curse of every cause into which it enters. No great work can be accomplished, except by each man breaking from the narrow circle within which his self-love would confine him, and becoming a labourer in the common field of duty. It is of infinite importance for every one of ourselves to consider, how far the religion of Jesus is doing its proper work in our own souls as to this point. The language of St. Paul is, "The love of Christ constrains us, that we should no longer live unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us, and rose again." Unless, therefore, this change is in some degree wrought—unless you love yourselves less, and other people better—unless a large portion is given, not to yourselves, but to the general welfare—unless you feel yourselves to be, as it were, stewards of the faculties, time, power, property, which God has given you—unless, when the stores are confided to your keeping, you delight to take your stand, like Joseph, at the door of the granary, and contribute to the hungry and the thirsty the bread and the water of life—unless this is the case, the spirit of religion is not in us, the spirit of our Master is not in us; and, whatever may be our opinion, we must come to the conclusion that our hearts are not right before God.

Brethren, there are certain selfish doctrines and sayings as to this point; such as, "Charity begins at home:" "Each man for himself, and God for us all;" which reduced into practice, according to the philosophy of this world, seem to mean little more than that each is to live for himself, and leave a hungry and suffering world to hunger and suffer as it may. There are certain sayings such as these which are leading articles in the creed of this world, and which tend to render society the distracted and turbulent scene which it is. Substitute for such maxims the two great maxims of the Gospel—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart"—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and you would, under God's blessing, change the desert into a garden, beat the swords into ploughshares, make the earth a counterpart of heaven, and assist, under God, to bring on that moral millenium which is the morning of the resurrection, and the first dawn of the everlasting glory of the saints and servants of the Lord.

Having thus touched upon some of the different classes of persons stated to have been employed in this great and good work, I proceed to consider, more particularly, in the second place, **THE SPIRIT BY WHICH THEY APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN ANIMATED.**

And here I may notice, in the first place, *the spirit of prayer* in which all the movements of Nehemiah and the people who co-operated with him, appear to have proceeded. No sooner had Sanballat, and other enemies of the Jews, heard that the walls were beginning to rise, than it is said they were wroth, and endeavoured, partly by mockery, and partly afterwards by threats, at once

to crush the work. "What" (said one) "do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?" "That which they build" (says another) "is so slight, that if a fox were to go up he would even break down their stone wall." Thus they had to encounter ridicule; and soon after they had to encounter most decided opposition. In these circumstances the servant of God felt that his best refuge was where, brethren, alone safety is to be found. And accordingly it is said that he instantly "went into the presence of the Lord;" and his language was, "Hear, O our God, for we are despised." And afterwards he says, "We made our prayer to God, and set a watch against them."

What an inestimable privilege is prayer to every man who has approached God through a Saviour! You meet the man of God in some seemingly deep anxiety, and he accosts you perhaps with his spirit in some measure cast down, and his forehead shaded with the feeling of care or apprehension. In a few moments you see him with every care laid to rest, and his countenance lighted up with the beams of hope and joy. What is the cause of the change? He has been with God: that beam on his countenance is from heaven; he has drawn nigh to God through a Saviour: he has cast his burden in prayer upon the Lord; and in the multitude of his sorrows the comforts of God have refreshed his soul. Your friend was a man perhaps in the hour of his last sickness, and you had prepared yourself to encounter a scene of perturbation, and doubt, and gloom, and possibility of fear. You find him on the contrary full of peace, and joy, and gratitude: you find that his last moment is his happiest; you find that to him the sick-bed is no place of alarm; and that in that moment in which he is about to appear in the presence of a holy and heart-searching Judge, his accents of praise and of joy were never so loud. The truth is, the sickness that has shut him out from the world has brought him closer to God: that spirit of prayer which perhaps the hurry and bustle of life had, in some degree impaired, has now taken full possession of his soul; and in deep communing with the Father of spirits, he has discovered such new sources of hope and joy that his soul longs to be gone to hold uninterrupted intercourse with the Father of spirits; longs to escape from a world of clouds, and storms, and doubts, and temptations, to the country of the blessed, to the bright region where is the palace of the Great King, where God dwells in the unbroken tranquillity of his own glory, and greatness, and joy.

Brethren, if you would prosper in the work of the Lord, whatever be the character of the duties you are called to discharge, your strength is in prayer, you must be striving to live a life of faith in the Son of God, you must go to him with earnest supplication, with strong crying and tears; you must turn from the shallow streams of this world's strength and wisdom, to the deep and bright fountains of power, in the strength and wisdom of your God. "By prayer I conquered" might be written on the monument of every true servant of God.

But I proceed to notice the second feature of the spirit by which the Jews were animated in this work of God; I mean that which is especially referred to in the words which are employed in my text. It is there said, "So built we the

wall, and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof;" (or, in other words, it was built to half its height;) "for," he adds, "the people had a *mind* to work." And what, brethren, can be of more importance to the success of any work than a willing mind? Many appear to me to live under a great mistake as to that point. What is more common than to hear persons say, "We have the will to do right, but we cannot fulfil our own wishes?" The fact is, that a large number of such persons want the will: "*Ye will not come unto me.*" They have no honest intention; if I may so express it, no *thorough-going* intention to do the will of the Lord. They may express many an idle wish to be Christians; they may indeed have the will to be Christians as far as it shall cost them nothing to become so: they would be willing to offer sacrifice to God of that which cost them nothing: they will not refuse the Gospel if you will sweeten the draught with self-indulgence. But they have no mind to forsake all and to follow Christ; to take up the cross in his service; to count every thing as dross and dung if but they may win Christ, and be found in him the objects of this grace, and the children of his family. In this sense of the word, they have not the will: the will is not right with God.

You observe, in the very Psalm we have been reading this evening, there is a remarkable account of the apostacy of the people, and their turning back in the day of battle; their various rebellions against God; and how it is added, as the very cause of that, that "their hearts were not right with God." Brethren, rely upon it, that, in a great multitude of instances, the work of conversion, or reform, is begun too near the surface. You ask the hand to work, and what is wanting is the *mind* to work. What we want is, not a new power so much as a new disposition, to have the mind newly cast in the image and character of our God. It is in vain to change the hand of the watch, if the mainspring is defective: it is in vain to rectify the machinery, if the system is not brought to act upon it: it is in vain to heal the muscle or the sinew, if there is no life's blood in the heart: it is in vain to mould the mere image of a man, if the spirit of life is not communicated: and all these are but the type and the image of a man, without the mind, without the will. If you would be successful labourers in the work of the Lord, public or private, the work of personal religion following national reform, ask him to give you the willing mind; to work in you to *will* as well as to *do*; to prompt the heart as well as move the hand.

The third and last quality I would notice in these Jewish builders, is, *their vigilance and courage in resisting the enemies of the cause in which their hearts were engaged.* "Nevertheless," says Nehemiah—notwithstanding all this opposition—"we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them." And again, "I set in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses." And again, "They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with



the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded."

What a lovely picture have we here of the bold and determined spirit with which these labourers of the Lord gave themselves to the work! And what a striking example for ourselves! Brethren, we live in a world at war with God and with the Gospel. Unconverted men are not neutrals between right and wrong; they love what is evil, and they hate what is good. They hate the Master whom, as Christians, we love and serve. They seek to quench that light of the Gospel which he has kindled. They will, in many instances, hate and resist you, if you are faithful to your God and Saviour, and contend earnestly for the faith that is given to the saints. For you, then, also, it is necessary to have the trowel in one hand, and the sword in the other; it is for you to remember (and here I am especially speaking to young people; you must be bold in the service of your God)—it is for you to remember, that while you are to be mild in the manner, you are to be strong, and upright, and determined in the act; to set your face as a flint against corruption; and to lift up the banner of the cross in the front of every opposer.

How base and how contemptible is a cowardly religion! Ashamed of Jesus! Can that be? How noble, and how suited to His service who died in the cause, is it to resist even unto blood where God and his honour are concerned! After all, brethren, I think that we are apt to undervalue the difficulties of religion as to this point. It wants much courage to be a true servant of God. It was urged upon Joshua—and we may urge it upon every soldier in the camp of Christ—"Be strong; be of good courage; and I will be with thee." Dear brethren, I trust there will be many in this congregation who will bring all their manhood to bear on religion; who will speak for their Lord in all places, and in all societies; and who will endeavour to make known that they have chosen the Lord's side, and that they mean to live and to die under the banner of his cross.

But it is time that I come, in conclusion, to notice the particular object of this sermon. As I said in the opening of this discourse, I believe that it is not necessary that I should urge, either upon the minister or upon the settled congregation of this place, that you should put your hearts into the work in which you are engaged. I have reason to believe that great sacrifices have been made in the maintenance of this place of worship; and I am sure it is no common subject of satisfaction to any Christian mind to witness such a congregation as this, and to believe that, to a considerable degree, large numbers of them are actually concerned honestly to promote the preaching of the Gospel in this place with the utmost possible effect. I trust, Christian brethren, that you render God the praise for whatever you have been permitted to do already. My object this evening is, particularly to press upon all who are present, the recollection that, humanly speaking, the maintenance of this place of worship, the maintenance of this congregation, the supply of their spiritual wants, (as assembled here, at least,) depends, next to the divine blessing, not upon any support from without, but upon yourselves within—on certain sermons preached during the year for promoting those particular purposes. Now, let me draw

from the text some natural, common-place conclusions, with regard to the accomplishment of this end.

In the first place, you have observed from the text—or at least from the passages connected with it, in the third and fourth chapters of Nehemiah—that *all classes* contributed to that end. There must be unity among ourselves; all classes must contribute to this end—the great a larger portion, and the poor a smaller portion; but all are to do what we can.

You observe that, in all these cases, there was an endeavour that each man should discharge his own particular office; to “repair,” as it is expressed, “before their own door.” That must be your endeavour: you must be cultivating *personal religion* in your own souls. You must not merely be looking to the religion of your neighbour; you must be looking to your own religion, your own vineyard, the state of your own heart. You must be asking yourselves, “Do I love my Lord and Saviour? Am I his, and is he mine?”

Moreover, you are to be doing your own particular work as to this church of which you are a member. If you have money to give, you must give it: if you have time to give, you must bestow it: if you have, as you certainly have, prayer to give, you must be pouring out your supplications before the God of all grace, that a special blessing may rest on the congregation assembling here.

You observe that, in this particular case, there was much of the spirit of *union*. Every man carried a trowel, and every man a weapon of defence. And may God, my Christian brethren, breathe more and more upon this congregation, the spirit of love, unity, sympathy, and brotherly affection, in this distracted, quarrelsome world! May there be found here one corner of it, at least, in which the true spirit of Gospel love prevails!

Then again you have seen that, in these builders of Jerusalem, there was a giving of *means*; and where there is a willing mind, providence constantly supplies the *means*. It is astonishing, where there is a disposition to do, how easily things are accomplished.

And observe, also, from these chapters, how much *the spirit of prayer* prevailed among these builders. Yes, brethren; and prayer is the very sinew of our spirits. You must begin, continue, and end, in prayer, if you mean, not merely that the walls of your place of worship should stand, but if you desire that the glory of the Lord shall be found to illuminate its walls. Prayer keeps the lamp of the altar bright: prayer gives you the presence of God.

I can truly say, in conclusion, how satisfactory and cheering the spectacle is to myself, of seeing a place of worship like this raised up from the midst of a poor population, as it was, at least, a few years since; large numbers collected together; a full congregation; and, as I venture to hope, the Gospel simply and faithfully preached to you. We ought to bless God who is the great Author of this work. Brethren, I commend it to his care. I desire for each and all of you, that Christ Jesus may become more precious to every one of your souls: that you may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of your God and Saviour; that large numbers may go from within these walls to fight the battle of the Lord; that your minister may find the seed sown striking root downward, and

bearing fruit upward ; and that his labours may be watered by the dews of heaven, and bring forth fruit a hundred-fold ; to the glory of God, and the salvation of a lost world. May God be with you ! May the power of the Spirit rest upon you ! And may you be enabled to go on your way peacefully and rejoicingly !

## THE COMMENDATION AND REWARD OF THE BENEVOLENT MAN.

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REV. EDWARD STEANE,

SALTERS' HALL, CANNON STREET, APRIL 1, 1835\*.

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“He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.”—PSALM, cxii. 9.

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THE author of this Psalm seems to have intended a description of the most remarkable properties of a good man, together with the happiness consequent upon the exercise of his virtues. He lays the basis of his entire character in religious principle, associated with religious practice: “He feareth the Lord, and delighteth greatly in his commandments.” Such terms, agreeably with the genius and spirit of the ancient dispensation, describe a man who, under the new economy, would be distinguished as an eminent Christian. It is perfectly consistent, therefore, to consider the several attributes of character ascribed to him, and the effects resulting from them, in an evangelical sense. The fear of God, and the love of God, if they are not precisely the same affection of the mind, are essentially connected with each other, and in the heart of a good man are never separated. The former was the regulating influence in the conduct of ancient believers, as the latter is in the deportment of Christians; and however they may be distinguished in their metaphysical nature, they are identified in their practical results. The fear of God led the one to delight greatly in his commandments, and his love constrains the other to every instance of Christian obedience.

Nor do they conduct to a different issue, in regard to the happy consequences which flow from their exercise. In blessings more congenial with the mode of the divine government as administered under the law, than under the spiritual constitution of the Gospel, the reward is indeed described by the Psalmist, as it is natural that it should be; but the spirit and intention of them all is expressed by the Apostle when he says, “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.”

The passage immediately before us is in exact coincidence with the entire Psalm, commending the benevolence which is so considerable a property in the character of the pious man, and declaring its reward. His commendation is expressed in the former part of the text: “He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor.” His reward in the latter: “His righteousness endureth for ever, his horn shall be exalted with honour.”

THE CONDUCT OF THE BENEVOLENT MAN IS in my text not simply

\* At the 103d Anniversary of the Widows' Fund.



described, but **COMMENDED**. It is mentioned to his honour that he is liberal in the use of his property, and bountiful in its distribution to the poor.

The sovereignty of God, which has place in every thing, is especially to be recognized in the communication of wealth. "The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and raiseth up." By whatever secondary means riches may be acquired, the pious man will consider them as bestowed from above. The inquiry, therefore, will naturally arise in his mind, for what purpose they are given to him? His possession of them he knows to be precarious and short. They belonged to others before they were possessed by him, and after he has enjoyed them for a little while, they will pass away to his successors. He will consequently be solicitous to employ them in such a manner as to make the reflection pleasant, should he be deprived of them, or to enable him to render a satisfactory account to Him by whom they were committed to his hands. That such account must be given, is the uniform doctrine of the inspired writers; for of the property which every man holds, he is not the absolute proprietor, but simply the steward. It is committed to him in trust; and obligations of a solemn nature are connected with it. His responsibility lies in part to society, but in an infinitely greater degree it passes over to God.

He who possesses wealth is entrusted with the means, to a very important extent, of alleviating the distresses and trials of human life. The rich and the poor are, in many respects, alike incident to the calamities of our common nature. They are equally participants of the frailty and feebleness, the passions and susceptibilities of fallen humanity. Disasters and afflictions overtake them both. They are alike born to sorrow, and fall a prey, without distinction, to diseases and death. But when any of the innumerable woes which beset our path fall upon the poor, they are less provided with the means of mitigating their severity, or of sustaining their pressure. The poor man has no resources laid up against the hour of adversity. His daily wants consume the daily produce of his toil. He labours hard, and lives meanly, and learns, in its full import, the primitive malediction, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground." For the purpose then of meeting such exigencies as these, the rich are endowed with their wealth. It is in their power to administer materially to the comfort of their fellow-creatures, to mitigate their distresses, to bind up the broken heart, to wipe away the tear of the sorrowful, and to snatch the miserable and the wretched from lingering affliction, or untimely death. That society is so constituted as to bring the rich and the poor into continual intercourse, is among the wise arrangements of Divine Providence. Opportunities are thus afforded for the growth of some of the best affections of our nature, and scope is given for the exercise of those generous sympathies and benevolent actions, which are at once the redeeming virtues, and the chief embellishments of our apostate world.

The possessors of wealth, it may be added, have it in their power to render efficient aid in that higher department of philanthropy which contemplates man not in the frailty of his mortal existence, but as the capable and destined inhabitant of an eternal world. In this point of view, riches acquire a worth incomparably beyond what intrinsically belongs to them. Without them it is difficult to perceive how the various enterprises of the Church for the conversion of the world could be carried on. By what means, in the absence of pecuniary

contributions, could our sanctuaries be reared, our ministers be supported, our Bibles circulate in all languages, and our missionary institutions send forth the heralds of redemption to the ends of the world? Accordingly, among the predictions of the future prosperity of the Church, it is foretold, that the riches of all nations shall be brought to her. "Then shalt thou see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory." Sanctified by its appropriation to such a purpose, wealth acquires an inestimable value, and becomes a powerful auxiliary to the faith and prayers of the servants of Christ. To consecrate your possessions to the purposes of Christian benevolence is the highest style of charity, and riches thus expended is precious seed, cast into the fruitful soil, which will bear a hundred-fold harvest, not only in this world, but in that also which is to come.

Such, then, being some of the purposes to which riches were intended to be applied, it is the commendation of the benevolent man that he puts them to their legitimate use. "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor." He neither accumulates nor wastes his wealth. His conduct stands at an equal distance from parsimony and prodigality. Unlike the man who worships mammon, he sees no scintillations of divinity in hoarded gold. His coffers never groan under the useless and guilty accumulation of wealth. He never deposits in an iron chest that which might be infinitely better laid up in heaven. With a wise discrimination, and a liberal hand, he bestows his abundance upon the indigent, and looks for no recompense except such as he will receive from God. In imitation of his Heavenly Father, he is diffusive in his bounty, dispersing, or scattering abroad his gifts as far as his ability and opportunity extend; or, like the man who is casting seed into the earth, he throws with a full hand, and a vigorous arm, as far as his strength can carry.

Equally remote also from the foolish, and not less criminal, extravagance of the profligate, he does not expend his riches in wasteful profusion. They are not dissipated in riotous excesses, in vain amusements, in expensive curiosities, in sensual gratifications, in costly magnificence of external pageants, but providently and with good consideration, they are laid out in necessary or benevolent uses, under the guidance of discretion and piety.

Four qualities in particular distinguish the generosity of the benevolent man.

First: In the distribution of his bounty he is *disinterested*. It is a very questionable sort of benevolence which communicates only to those who are not in circumstances to need your courtesy. "If ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? and if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again." The motive in such a case vitiates the deed. Yet it is the very summit of this world's prudence, to bestow your favours in such a way, upon such persons, and in such circumstances, as may best secure their profitable

return to your own advantage. But the prudence of this world is incompatible with Christian charity. That divine virtue is of nobler extraction, and carries herself with a loftier mien. She never stoops to the meanness of a selfish action, nor consults with an interested purpose her own advancement. She seeks out, as the objects of her beneficence, the helpless, the miserable, and the destitute, and leaves her gifts where she can hope for no return.

Secondly : The generosity of the benevolent man is bestowed, not indiscriminately, but *with a judicious distinction of the recipients, and their circumstances*. It is a mistaken benevolence which gives in charity what might be acquired by honest industry. A profuse, and, at the same time, ill-directed almsgiving, is productive of more evil than good. It never was the intention of that great Being from whose appointment the ranks and subordinations of society take their rise, that any portion of the community, except the imbecile, and such as labour under distressing and incurable maladies, should be entirely dependent upon eleemosynary support. Abilities for physical toil, or mental occupation, are (with these melancholy exceptions) communicated to all mankind, and it is evidently the ordination of God, that each should provide for his own wants, and contribute to the general prosperity.

But when the largest deductions are made upon this ground, opportunities will still be left in sufficient number to afford occasion for the constant exercise of benevolence. The words of our divine Lord will continue to be literally verified : “Ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good.” The widow and the orphan, the blind, the aged, and the destitute will still be left to press their claims upon the sympathy of Christian hearts. In addition to which, the spiritual necessities of our fellow-creatures at all times open a wide field, over which the lover of human souls may expatiate, and discharge the noblest offices of Christian love. It is not, therefore, to every applicant, without discretion and without inquiry, that you will exhibit your charity, lest it should lose in its want of discrimination the value it acquires by its liberality. You will rather aim to be distinguished, not less by the sound judgment you exercise in giving, than by the cheerfulness and generosity with which your gifts are bestowed. As the almoners of divine bounty, your benevolence will be at once ample and prudent ; remembering that it is a part of your obligation in that noble character, to communicate in such modes and on such occasions as will secure the greatest alleviation of individual suffering, or the largest amount of public good.

Thirdly : An act of benevolence is indescribably augmented in value *by its modesty, and the benignity of manner in which it is performed*. Hence the directions of our Lord, “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them :” “Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth.” Ostentation and a vain-glorious spirit, as they are the bane of all excellence, are especially inimical to the virtue of benevolence. They despoil it of its chief value, by degrading it from the rank of Christian graces. When it ceases to be the companion of humility, its sweetest attributes are lost. They to whose hands a bountiful and gracious Providence has committed more of the good things of this life, than to their fellow-men, occupy, if they knew and judged of it aright, an enviable station. To them the capacity is imparted, of becoming the benefactors of their species, and the successful imitators of Him who went

about doing good. But in the communication of their abundance, they will best exemplify his temper, if their charity be unaccompanied with whatever would demonstrate a consciousness of superiority in themselves, or impress a sense of obligation upon others. In the only posthumous sentence which is recorded as having fallen from his lips, he has taught us, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" and never is the exercise of benevolence so laudable in itself, or so acceptable to its recipient, as when the force and spirit of this beautiful sentiment are embodied in the act. The charity of some men loses half its worth, and all its grace, by the haughty and repulsive manner in which it is bestowed. On no occasion is a fitter opportunity afforded for the exercise of an ingenuous, humble, and unassuming disposition, than in administering to the temporal necessities of the poor, but honoured disciples of our blessed Lord. The party obliged is not so much the individual who receives as he who bestows the gift. He is most indebted to the divine bounty, since upon him the principal distinction and the greatest happiness have been conferred. So let your beneficence be distinguished by its unobtrusiveness and meekness. Like the gentle stream which flows through the valleys, concealed in its lowly channel, and detected only by the luxuriance which it sheds upon its banks; let it court not the applause, nor win the observation of men, but retiring in its congenial modesty, be

" Never seen, but in its bless'd effects."

Fourthly: Benevolence is then only acceptable to God, when it *proceeds from an evangelical motive, and is distinguished by its single aim*. If it is to take rank among the graces of the Spirit, it must spring from love to Christ; and if it aspires to an eternal reward, it must aim at the glory of God. The mere act of charity, apart from the principle by which it is induced, and from the ultimate object of its exercise, possesses none of those qualities which will commend it to the divine approbation. Unless its origin be found in a deep sense of obligation to the mercy of God, through the mediatorial humiliation and sacrifice of his beloved Son, and unless its designed tendency be to glorify him, as the Fountain of all goodness, and the God of all grace, it will never secure his commendation. The cross of Christ must supply the motive, the example of the Redeemer the pattern, and the glory of God the end of Christian charity. Imperfect as our motives always are, it requires that they be examined with more than ordinary severity in cases where principles of an inferior kind are so likely to influence our conduct. Indigence and distress make an affecting appeal to our humanity, our pity, and the instinctive sensibility of our nature; and though it would be criminal to stifle the voice of sympathy thus awakened in the bosom, and pleading for the necessities of the poor, yet it must not be concealed that these feelings may exist in the absence of piety, and many a deed of benevolence may be done under their influence, which at length will be disowned by the Searcher of hearts. "He is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed." In the estimation he forms of them the motive is never forgotten; and every action will be found deficient, when put into his just balance, from which a holy motive is dis severed. The love of man is always a questionable sentiment when separated from the love of God. Unless it grow on this stock, little value can be attached to the fruit it produces. But where



it is connected as by a vital bond of influence with this first principle of all true religion, it springs from its proper root, and becomes itself the fulfilment of the second great command. The Christian philanthropist therefore is the man whose benevolent actions are emphatically "works of faith and labours of love." He looks to Calvary, and sees there the grand incentive to all virtue. The influence under which he acts is not the temporary excitement of sympathetic feeling, nor the sentimental emotion of a poetic generosity, nor the feverish thirst for distinction and applause, nor the mere mechanical habit of doing as others have done; but it is a divine influence—a motive which comes fresh into his bosom from the fount of all purity and grace, and which instigates not to a fitful, but to a persevering—not to an indolent, but to an indefatigable—not to a self-complacent, but to a self-denying exercise of that "pure religion which is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." He who from such a principle engages in offices of brotherly kindness and charity never arrogates to himself the glory, but ascribes it all to God. So the chiefest of the Apostles, he who laboured more abundantly than they all, says with inimitable humility, "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me;" and "so likewise ye when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do."

I come now, in the second place, to speak of **THE BENEVOLENT MAN'S REWARD**. "His righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour."

The reward consequent upon the exercise of sanctified affections and Christian conduct, follows partly in the order of natural results, and partly of gracious recompense. Yet what we are accustomed to consider as taking place naturally, or according to the established ordination of moral causes and effects, is in fact no less the result of divine beneficence, than the immediate bestowment in any particular instance of a recompense by God. Hence the whole reward is to be resolved into the favour and gratuitous kindness of the Divine Being. He has graciously determined that the poor and imperfect imitations of his own most blessed example which distinguish any of his fallen creatures shall lead to an honourable distinction among their fellow-men, and be held in condescending and everlasting remembrance by himself.

It is not therefore to be inferred, that the alms-giving of the benevolent man constitutes, in a judicial sense, his righteousness or justification, and so entitles him as a matter of right to the rewards of a glorious immortality; for such a sentiment would subvert the entire fabric of a sinner's hope, and transfer the dependence of guilty creatures, from the sure basis of the great atonement, to the sandy foundation of human works. No, beloved brethren, we hold by the cross. Our righteousness is of faith in God's incarnate Son. We count all things but loss for the knowledge of him. Utterly do we repudiate, and abandon with loathing, every righteousness of man's device. Our best deeds need forgiveness; our holiest services are polluted. O let not vain, presumptuous, human nature lift up itself to be on righteous terms with God. Rather in the dust should we hide our guilty heads, while blushes suffuse our face, and the prayer of penitential sorrow is breathed from our broken hearts. In deep

prostration let us lie before the mercy-seat. There is the place for sinners. The blood of propitiation is sprinkled there. Jesus, the Lamb of God, presents his once offered sacrifice, and pardons flow thence to the contrite. Not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, were we redeemed, but with his precious blood; and not with thousands of silver and gold can salvation be procured. No wealth can purchase heaven; no charity can scale the lofty battlements of the eternal city; but the redeemed of the Lord walk there, "who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

The doctrine of a free justification by an imputed righteousness, the righteousness of the crucified Son of God, is then dear to our hearts. We hold it as the pledge of our brightest hopes, and the charter of our best inheritance; and we hold it therefore in no qualified sense, or circumscribed degree, but in its scriptural plenitude and glory. It is not upon his charities that the Christian reposes with an imagined, though a falsely imagined security, but upon an all-sufficient and accepted atonement. His soul clings to nothing short of that. There he rests like the guiltiest of his race; and resting there, he thinks no demonstration too costly, to show his sense of gratitude for a lively participation by faith of God's unspeakable gift.

But piety and benevolence nevertheless enjoy their reward. Though every notion of meritoriousness be discarded, the Great Rewarder has bound together the cultivation of the Christian graces with a recompense of honour in this life, and of everlasting felicity in the world to come. Thus while he lives the benevolent man is held in honourable estimation among his fellow-men: the remembrance of his piety survives when he is gone; and in the future world God bestows upon him an imperishable recompense and exalts him to dignity among the spirits of the just.

First: *The exercise of benevolence naturally conciliates esteem.* God has so constituted the human mind, that it instinctively pays its deference to moral worth. All virtue is impressed with a certain majesty and beauty which compel the admiration of the observer. As the senses are regaled by what is pleasant to the eye, and sweet to the taste, and melodious to the ear, so the soul is delighted by what is excellent and worthy. All virtuous conduct is deemed honourable; but men ever reserve their best eulogiums for the disinterested benefactors of their kind. Not that the unthinking multitude either discern the worth or appreciate the unobtrusive charities of the man who spends his active toils and his pecuniary resources amidst the dwellings of widowed loneliness, and the receptacles of the miserable, the infirm, and the diseased. It is not the noisy and undistinguishing voice of popular applause, that such a man would either covet or obtain. But he will assuredly acquire what next to the testimony of an enlightened conscience is with just reason to be valued—the estimation of the wise and good. And though the thirst after human commendation is a motive which the Christian preacher admits not among his scripturally accredited principles of action, it is doubtless an honour to any man that he is held in distinction by the excellent of the earth, and worthily esteemed by the saints of the Most High. Hence in the judgment of the wise man: "A good name is rather to be chosen than riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold."

Besides which, it seems to result to the bountiful man as a fulfilment of the

divine promise, that "his horn is exalted with honour." For there is no instance of practical piety by which God is more glorified than this. It is an imitation of Him who is the Universal Benefactor; a treading in His footsteps who will have it celebrated among his loftiest attributes that "he giveth food to the hungry, executeth judgment for the oppressed, preserveth the strangers, and relieveth the fatherless and widow." By such good works it is when men behold them, that our Heavenly Father is glorified. The partakers of your pious aims are moved to a devout admiration of Him who disposes your hearts to a compassionate consideration of their distresses, and many tears and sorrowful lamentations are transferred into hymns of grateful praise. Thus St. Paul speaks of that charitable contribution which was raised in the Church at Corinth, for the poor saints at Jerusalem: "For the administration of this service not only supplieth the wants of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God: while by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them and unto all men." Since then God is thus glorified by the generousities of his people, he is "not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love." His infinite goodness will return in honour what they obediently render in duty. From him all true dignity proceeds. He is the Fountain of honour and truth. The disposition of all things is with him, and in his hands are the hearts of all. In fulfilment therefore of his own divine promise, he will prefer and dignify the man who advances his praise, for he hath said, "Them that honour me, I will honour." While parsimony and prodigality are alike held in contempt; "the liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand."

Secondly: Next to the honour they receive while they live, it is both intimated in the text, and more definitely expressed in other parts of Scripture, that *the benefactors of mankind shall be remembered with affectionate veneration when they cease to be the inhabitants of the present world.* Of little consequence indeed can it be to a soul which has already stood in the presence of the Eternal, and from his sentence received its unchangeable destination, whether to the regions of the lost, or to the mansions of the blessed, what judgment may be formed of its actions by posterity. The great anxiety should doubtless be not to acquire posthumous reputation among men, but to approve ourselves to God; and such will be the solicitude of every philanthropist who acts on Christian principles. Yet we ought not to undervalue a consideration to which importance is evidently attached in the Oracles of truth. The inspired writers in repeated instances speak of it as part at least of a good man's singular felicity that his name shall be followed with blessings, and the remembrance of his piety be cherished when he has entered upon his everlasting rest. Thus in contrast with the contemptuous oblivion into which the wicked shall fall it is said, "The memory of the just is blessed; but the name of the wicked shall rot." So in a verse preceding my text, the Psalmist declares that, "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance;" while of the wicked it is said in the book of Job, "His remembrance shall perish from the earth."

Experience confirms the declarations of Scripture. The names of holy men of former generations are still fragrant in the Church, and their deeds of beneficence will never be forgotten. The alms of Cornelius, the garments of

Dorcas, and the hospitality of Gaius to the brethren and to strangers, have found an imperishable record in the sacred page; while our own age has already given to posterity the names of Howard, of Wilberforce, and of Carey, to be enrolled among the most illustrious lovers of mankind. Their deeds of disinterested and self-denying piety will be told through all future times, and men will pronounce their names with admiration, when the monuments of heroes and the mausoleums of kings shall have mouldered into dust. No spices can enbalm, no marble perpetuate the memory like virtuous and beneficent actions. The very grave of the good man is venerable, and his dust fragrant as the breath of the morning, and sweet as the flowers of spring.

Thirdly: but *the chief part of that reward which it pleases God to bestow upon Christian beneficence is reserved for another world.* Little as we know of that future state of being upon which we enter at death, we are left in no doubt of the fact, that it will be to every man a state of misery or of happiness, according to the manner in which he shall have spent this present probationary season on earth. They, consequently, who, "by patient continuance in well-doing, are seeking for glory, honour, and immortality," shall not find themselves disappointed at last. That divine and adorable Person, who at the last day will be our Judge, has already made us acquainted with the principle of discrimination upon which the judgment will proceed. When all nations shall be gathered before him, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, placing the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left, the great elements of character, which will furnish the rule of distinction, will consist of acts of kindness done to the poor or the persecuted disciples of our Lord. "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me; for inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto me." Wherefore, to them who are thus applauded will he add, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world."

Then shall be brought to light every secret visit to the abodes of poverty, every prayer offered up by the bed of affliction, every alms bestowed upon the indigent. Incomparably better will it be, in that day, to be known as one who sheltered the outcast, vindicated the oppressed, dried the tear of the sorrowful, soothed the couch of the dying parent, and then became the protector of the widow, and the orphan's friend; than to rank among the most distinguished by birth, by talents, or by this world's renown. Over all those whose titles to distinction stand on no better conditions than these, will God lift up the head of the Christian philanthropist. Him will he exalt with honour, and give him a dignified rank among the spirits of the just. O, with what indescribable surprise and rapture will he find that his poor imperfect services, his little, and as he would deem them, insignificant offices of charity, are all set down in the annals of heaven, and judged worthy of an imperishable recompense! With what amazement will it fill him, and with what ecstacy, to hear his Judge pronounce his encomium before the universe—"Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."



The Institution, whose claims upon your liberal support I am now to present to your attention, is, on many accounts, worthy of the continued and increased patronage of the friends of the Redeemer. And it is, certainly, not amongst the least considerable circumstances which may be spoken to its praise, that it was founded by the piety of our ancestors, and has flourished for more than a century. It has thus stood the test of time: and while many other designs, even of a benevolent nature, have either been superseded, or, finding no adequate encouragement, have expired; this has shewn itself to possess a vigorous constitution, and continues to this day dispensing its benefits according to the original intention of its founders. Its "hoary head is a crown of glory, for it is found in the way of righteousness." Those charitable persons who set it on foot, and most of their immediate successors in its management, have gone to their eternal reward. The early recipients of its bounty also have entered into rest. And may it not be permitted us to imagine with what holy joy they have met in the presence of their gracious Lord; the one not having a benevolent desire ungratified, nor the other a want unsupplied? I cannot but feel that antiquity invests this excellent institution with more than ordinary claims upon the consideration of the present times. Since its youth and its manhood were spent in works of beneficence, its old age is rendered peculiarly venerable. As our forefathers witnessed its infant efforts, and saw it take its first steps in the career of pious benevolence, and their children fostered its maturing years; it may surely appeal to us, descendants of the third generation, to cherish its still remaining strength, nor suffer it to fall into decrepitude and neglect.

True it is that during the hundred years that have rolled over it, many other societies for charitable purposes have risen into existence, and the demands formerly made upon the pecuniary resources of the Church of Christ have multiplied to an almost indefinite extent: nor in pleading for this charity, valuable as it is, would I wish to divert the supplies of any other; yet I may be allowed to urge that if what is given to them is given at the expence of this nothing is gained to the general cause of philanthropy. It is at the best but a transfer; and the possibility at least may be suggested, that it may not in every case be a transfer considerably and wisely made. It will, I am sure, be acknowledged, that, amidst the numerous, novel, and constantly increasing modes of doing good by which the present age is distinguished, there is a danger lest our more ancient, and on that account, perhaps, less known, and more unobtrusive institutions should be suffered to decay. Happy will the advocate of "THE WIDOWS' FUND," who now addresses you, deem himself, if his feeble, though well-intentioned plea, may attract to its proceedings and its claims your friendly regard.

It may, I apprehend, with truth be urged, that, of all the societies to which adavance has been made, there is not one prepared to step into the place of that, for which I plead, should it unhappily lose the public support. Were the means withholden by which this venerable institution fulfils its truly Christian design, it is difficult to conceive in what way so serious a calamity could be repaired as would then overtake its annual pensioners. None will question, I will not say the desirableness, but the imperative duty of providing for them; and since no more recent method of meeting their necessities has been proposed, this society must persevere in its laudable and unsuperseded labours. And it

will persevere. Its long tried friends will not forsake it; new coadjutors will step forward with their aid; and that watchful and kind Providence which has hitherto smiled upon its efforts, will not suffer the stream of its bounty to exhaust the springs from which it flows.

Language thus confident will not be deemed misplaced, if, in conclusion, I call your attention, in few words, distinctly to its object. If there be one class of individuals whose portion of the common afflictions of life, more especially commends them to the sympathy of Christian bosoms than another, it is precisely that class for whose relief this society exists. No condition presents an image of loneliness like that of the widow; or of destitution like that of the fatherless. Bereft of their protector, their counsellor, their guide, where can a destitute mother and her orphan children look? On whom can she repose when the centre of her affections is gone? To whom direct her infant charge for succour when their parent is committed to the grave? And if that parent have been a holy man of God, the more irreparable their loss. Accustomed to the instructions of such a teacher, who can supply his place? Deprived of the prayers of such an advocate, what voice can intercede for them in the deserted closet, or guide their devotions at the family altar? When that smile is withdrawn in which the innocence of childhood loved to disport; when those lips are silent on which the listening family-group had been wont to hang with infantile delight, while they poured forth streams of entertainment and knowledge; when those eyes are closed, from whose mild lustre a mother's heart caught the inspiration of gladness; when that arm lies nerveless on which she had so often leaned with fond affection, as they walked in company to the house of God; when a cheerless void occupies his place, whose was the presiding mind, and the dignified demeanour, that constituted the stay and the glory of the household; when a bereavement so complicated, a calamity so overwhelming is sustained, who can wonder at the exclamation, "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me!" It is yours, then, my Christian brethren, the patrons and supporters of this institution, to pour the balm of comfort into this disconsolate bosom. It is yours to succour these destitute orphans. You step forward at such a time, and offer the substantial proof of your generous sympathy. Your hearts compassionate the distress of the widow, and your seasonable bounty comes like a messenger of mercy to fulfil His promise, who hath said, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me."

## THE FACT, EVILS, AND REMEDY OF DRUNKENNESS.

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REV. J. M. RODWELL, A.M.

ST. PETER'S CHURCH, SAFFRON HILL, APRIL 5, 1835.

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"An enemy hath done this."—MATTHEW, xiii. 28.

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It is at once an humbling and an awful sight, to look back upon the time that is past, and to see what misery, what havoc, and woe, sin has brought into the world. And equally humbling it is, to look around us now, and to see the dark tide of evil still flowing on—to see the power of pride, of malice, of wrath, of all evil, still holding their ancient sway over the heart of man. Look where you will, in the history of every nation that has ever flourished, look at the domestic annals of every family, look at the individual histories of each single heart, and what an awful picture is brought before you, of rebellion against God, of unkindness to man, of injustice to ourselves: how fearfully does it urge upon us the truth of the Scripture statement, that "the carnal heart is enmity against God;" that men "know not the way of peace," that they have "all gone out of the way, and that none is righteous, no not one."

True there has been some good seed sown in the wilderness; and here and there, where the grace of God, and the knowledge of a Saviour have visited the heart of man, there has been a green and a shady place in the midst of this howling wilderness. But what a harvest of tares has ever been with the wheat! What a mixture of much evil with little good. How often has the darkness seemed ready to overwhelm the light! So that wherever Christ has had his elect, there also Satan has had his thralls, his slaves and votaries, in still greater abundance. And an easy, though painful—a startling, though profitable, task would it be, to trace out each form of evil; to shew how it exists in the heart of man, against light, warning, and mercy, and Gospel grace; and to prove that "an enemy hath done this." We might drag into light the various refuges of lies, to which men will trust for salvation; to the mercy of God, without knowing him in his dear Son; to a trust in their own righteousness; to a proud sense of their superiority over others; to a late and death-bed repentance: and which of these is not the act of the enemy of our souls, and calculated to ruin our present peace and eternal prospects?

But it is not my intention now, to call your attention to the parable before us, nor to the general fact of the corruption of the human race. We are not now about to dwell on the power, and subtlety, and deceitfulness of sin in general; but, by a plain statement of plain facts, to draw your minds to one

most alarming and fearful aspect which sin assumes, and to the remedy which has been proposed as a cure to check the growing evil.

Now if there be any one sin, of which, more than another, it may be said, that "an enemy hath done this," it is the sin of drunkenness. There was, indeed, a time, when the world was filled with violence; at another time it turned aside, and was wholly given to idols: but now, of our country, and of many others too, it is awfully true that their belly is their god, and almost every thing is sacrificed to the love of strong drink. If any one doubt it, let him, as a sample, cast his thoughts over this metropolitan city, and think, which, at this present moment, are the most numerous—the worshippers of Jehovah in the temple, or the drinkers in the public-houses. Aye, brethren, and therefore it is time we "cry aloud and spare not, and lift up our voice like a trumpet, and shew our people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sin."

First, then, we are to consider, the fact, that drunkenness is common. Secondly, the evils of drunkenness. Thirdly, the remedy proposed. And it is to this latter point that we shall principally direct your attention

Now upon the first point, that **DRUNKENNESS IS COMMON**, you need, alas, but little from me to teach you that. And it ought to make us blush for our characters as Englishmen, when we reflect, that this country, which yields in Christianity to none among all the nations—that England, the land of liberty, the citadel of freedom, the land of arts and sciences—it is, I say, a humbling thought, that England—Protestant England—is, with all her blessings, the land of drunkenness. Even the blind followers of the impostor Mahomet—even the idolatrous Hindoo—can set us an example it would be well to follow. Even bigoted Spain, and infidel and thoughtless France, are Temperance itself compared with us. There is no nation under heaven more infamously disgraced, more deeply tarnished with the sin of drunkenness, than our own. It meets us, go where we will: it insults us on God's holy day; it stares you in the face as you go to the temple of your God. You may trace it, with all its wretchedness and misery, in the abodes of the working classes: you will find it in the dwellings of the middling classes, in the mansions of the great; though doubtless of late years, it has much decreased among the educated and respectable.

But, that you may know that matters have come to a most awful and alarming crisis, I will confine myself to a statement of plain, undoubted, and well authenticated facts. By a recent statement, and that, we fear, considerably short of the reality,) "There are in London and its suburbs, five hundred thousand Sabbath breakers, living in total neglect of religion, without God, without hope, and spreading the plague of ungodliness to all around them. Ten thousand of these are devoted to play; above twenty thousand are addicted to beggary: thirty thousand are living by theft and fraud: twenty-three thousand are every year picked up, senseless and helpless in the streets through strong drink. Above one hundred thousand are habitual gin-drinkers; and about one hundred thousand more systematic and abandoned profligates\*."

I might bring before you a statement, almost as alarming, in regard to other great towns, and the rural districts in the three kingdoms. But I confine myself

\* The **HON.** and **REV.** B. W. NOEL's Letter to the Bishop of London.



to the metropolis: and you may be startled to hear, that the number of public houses and gin-shops is four thousand and seventy-three, besides one thousand one hundred and eighty-two beer shops; and great numbers of coffee-shops, many of which are said to be at present worse than the worst public-houses, as schools of profligacy. Not long since, the following numbers were observed to enter a shop in Holborn in one day—five thousand and twenty-four; and six thousand and eighteen a shop in Whitechapel. And even allowing, what probably was the case, that the same individuals entered more than once, what an awful and alarming fact is brought before you even then. And, remember, that these places—these nests of disgrace, guilt, and misery—fill most on Saturday nights and Sabbath days; and thus the drunkard is entirely unfitted for all hearing of the Word of God, and all the means of grace. And if I were asked, as a minister of the Gospel, what is that sin against which I have to struggle hardest, that which most indisposes and unfits the souls of my people from profiting by the message I bring, and fills my heart with aching and despair—I should say, it is this sin of drunkenness. Go down Saffron Hill when I may—Sabbath or weekday, morning or evening, early or late, my ears are always shocked at the sounds of unholy revelry, or of drunken frays, within those dens of vice, the gin-shops. And as I walk along the streets of this unhappy district (O would to God that they knew their unhappiness!) how often can I see the traces of this dreadful vice in the pale emaciated features, in the staring watery eye, in the torn and dirty clothes of the habitual drunkard.

And, secondly, as to **THE EVILS OF DRUNKENNESS**. I need not shock your ears, or harrow up your souls, with the awful tale. My brethren, if I were disposed to work upon your feelings—from my own little experience in visiting the sick and dying-beds of those whose life this “enemy” has brought low—I have materials before me that would make the blood run cold in your veins: but I forbear. I appeal again to facts—upon a larger scale. Ask those who are in the habit of visiting our prisons, what it is that fills those abodes of shame and misery. They will tell you “it is intemperance.” Ask our judges and justices of peace, what is that which brings before them such a continual stream of culprits. Ask the overseers, what fills the alms-house and the poor-house. Ask the physician, what it is which fills the madhouse. They will all answer, as with one voice, that it is intemperance—that sin which is the darkest spot on Britannia’s brow, the sorest blight on our character as a Christian people, the great destroyer of our individual happiness: for who is more wretched, who more depressed in spirits, than the drunkard, when sober? The great destroyer of our national industry, national integrity, peace, and prosperity; for you only want the universal prevalence of this vice, to make nations bankrupts in virtue, bankrupts in property, bankrupts, I had almost said, of existence itself.

In the year 1831, there were ninety-five thousand persons committed to prison in England and Wales; and, by an inquiry made in those districts where it was possible to make inquiry, and from which a tolerably accurate estimate may be formed of the average of crime and its causes throughout the whole—it appears that four-fifths of the crime that has been committed may be traced to habits of

drinking ; while three-fourths of the beggary and pauperism, one-half the insanity, which exists in the kingdom, may be traced to the same source. And if you want a good plain reason, why crime, beggary, and insanity, have increased, you may learn a reason in the increased consumption of spirituous liquors. For in the year 1821, there were twelve millions of gallons paid duty ; in the year 1826, nearly twenty-four millions ; and in the year 1830 nearly twenty-eight millions. Again, the practice of assembling together in public-houses, for the purpose of drinking, is a fruitful source of evil. To these places the worst of characters resort ; and there they use their influence to corrupt and debase their fellows. It is there that “ evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived :” it is there that they excite and inflame one another, and strengthen the bands of their unholy fellowship. “ Come ye,” say they, “ I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink ; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.” It is there that men learn to speak evil of dignities ; to condemn and set at defiance the laws of their country. It is there that they form plans for rapine, robbery, and destruction, and thence they sally forth to execute them. It is there that they take into their bodies that poison, which ruins not only body, but soul as well ; which teaches them to blaspheme and dishonour God ; which makes them ready for unbridled anger, ripe for disgusting lewdness, ready to every work of evil.

O, it is this vice of drunkenness, it is these dens of debauchery, these manufactories of disease, which slay their thousands, and their tens of thousands, in our streets. It is this vice which impairs the health of its victim, robs the colour from his cheek, and steals the vigour from his limbs. It makes him despondent, sad, and listless when sober ; delirious and insane when filled with drink. It wastes his money, consumes his time, destroys his energies, and ruins his character. It robs his house of its little furniture ; it takes from his poor children their clothing and their food. He goes home, furious and violent with the unhappy mother ; and thus the best and sweetest flower of domestic happiness is torn up by the very roots. And not merely men, but—we blush to say it—females, in nearly as great a proportion, indulge in this awful vice : and thus, sometimes, both man and wife together, instead of fulfilling their marriage vows—instead of loving, cherishing, and honouring each other in the fear of God, till death doth them part, they plunge on through guilt and disgrace, through poverty and misery, to a hopeless, Christless death : they make themselves unfit for either earth or heaven. Earth can give them no hope nor comfort ; heaven refuses to listen, or to open the gates of mercy : and hell opens wide its mouth to receive its miserable victims. O, truly may it be said of this vice, “ An enemy hath done this.” Who but an enemy could have fixed upon man a vice, which unites at once all that is loathsome in the brute, and all that is evil in the fiend ? a vice whose name may fitly be called Legion, which brings in its train every other vice ; and then, like a horse which has got the bit into its own keeping, sweeps on with fearful velocity, until both the soul and body plunge into eternal ruin.

My brethren, I am willing to hope, that no one of you who hear me now, is addicted to this wretched vice. We hope better things of you ; we trust that you have not so learned Christ. We would hope that you believe, and live .

according to your belief, that no drunkard or unclean person shall inherit the kingdom of God. If, indeed, I thought that I had a drunkard, or one who was likely to become a drunkard, before me, I would turn this sermon into a prayer for his immortal soul ; I would beseech this congregation to baptize him with their tears and prayers ; I would thunder into his ear the word which saith, " Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess." " Let not thy heart be overcharged with drunkenness." " Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying." " The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these ; envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings." I would make myself a suppliant to that person, and would plead with him for his immortal soul. I would argue with him till I had convinced him that he is sinning against God, against Christianity, against his neighbour, against himself ; that he is turning the blessings God has given him into ruin to his soul and body ; that he is sinning against sense and reason, and debasing himself far, far below the level of the brutes that perish.

But, alas, the effect of this sin, is to keep those who are guilty of it from the word of reproof, and the doctrines of the Gospel. And I feel, therefore, that my business is now, not so much with confirmed drunkards, as with sober, temperate, and respectable young men and women ; that I have to put them on their guard against any step towards this disgraceful and ruinous vice. Recollect, my brethren, I entreat you all, that even the most confirmed drunkard, was once a sober man. Every drunkard once hated and abhorred this sin, as much as any of us. He or she was led by little and little, till Satan got them ; until their corrupt nature, prone to every sin, yielded to the tyranny of this, and then what at first was an occasional transgression, became an habitual sin. They began by taking the *little* : the want was created ; the vital powers, having once felt the stimulus, require it again and again, until the little becomes *much*. The unfortunate being, like a ball rolling down a hill, rolls faster and faster ; and, unless some miracle of grace stop him, he rolls into eternity, undone for ever. The chance, therefore, is, that if you take a little, you will probably want more. The question lies between *all* or *none* : and the duty is—abstain wholly. " Touch not, taste not, handle not." Avoid places where the temptation may be met with : shun evil companions. Beware lest music, and foolish songs, corrupt your imaginations. For in these gin-shops and tea-gardens, the inducement of music is generally provided : and thus, music and poetry, the daughters of heaven—when employed aright, the sweetest solaces and aids to devotion—become, in the hands of Satan, the stimulants of the devil to destroy souls.

But, in the third place, let me turn your attention to THE REMEDY—and the only remedy which has yet been proposed—namely, TEMPERANCE SOCIETIES. I say that the Temperance Society is the only remedy which has been yet proposed : and all you who are agreed that drunkenness is an evil, will also agree that we ought to do our best in stopping its progress : that we ought to follow in a path which experience has proved successful ; and that if we cannot do what we would, we at least ought to do what we can. Now if it be

a righteous thing to oppose sin ; and if it be the mark of a Christian character to oppose all sin, it cannot be wrong to oppose that sin which is the seed and moving cause of every sin whatever. Now the one simple principle upon which Temperance Societies go is this : a set of persons are persuaded that drunkenness is an evil, and a common evil : they see the cause of it to be spirituous liquors. They believe that the proper place for such liquors is the apothecary's shelf ; their only proper use a medicinal use : and therefore they agree to abstain from the use of ardent spirits altogether, except for that medicinal purpose which they believe to be lawful. And thus, by their example, they aim to discourage the undue manufacture of the article, and the undue consumption which prevails at present.

Now this, brethren, is only what I apprehend every true Christian does, without signing his name at all. But finding that by signing his name to the Temperance Declaration, his example, combined with the example of others, may do good, he is bound to do it ; and I cannot imagine that those who are actuated by Christian motives, would hesitate to put their names to an engagement, which binds them to do nothing more than they are willing to do already. And as for those who are not yet actuated by Christian motives, it is well if we can get them to abstain from what may lead them wrong, by any moral motives of any kind. Now the Temperance Societies hope to do that by united effort, which could never be done by single example, or individual exertion.

I need not remind you, that "union is strength ; combination is power." And we know how successfully men combine, to achieve their works of art, to enrich their purses, to accomplish their political purposes : and why should not the children of light combine, for eternal, holy purposes, as worldly men combine for the things of a moment ? Would it not be a glorious sight—a sight worthy of the religion we profess—to see persons of all ranks voluntarily engaging, by mutual promise to one another, to practise one of the great Christian virtues ; and to endeavour to bring back their misguided brethren into the paths of sobriety ?

Each of you possess much greater influence than you are aware of, if you will but preach by that most eloquent of preachers—a good example. Some of you may, perhaps, at this moment, be in the habit of indulging moderately in the use of ardent spirits ; now suppose that such persons, and especially those who have numerous acquaintance, numerous servants and workmen, were to give up the habit entirely, and let it be known that you do so, and tell it out plainly why you do so—O you know not what good might be done among your associates and your neighbours, your dependants and your friends ; you would take away an occasion of offence from many a weak brother ; you would indeed deprive yourselves of an unnecessary indulgence, but you might work a temporal and eternal good. I say you might deprive yourselves of an *unnecessary indulgence* ; for there is the medical testimony of the first men in every part of this kingdom, who declare, that spirits in any shape are decidedly injurious to men in health, even when supposed to be useful ; that they predispose the body to disease, prevent the cure of disease, prey on the health, and shorten life. What, brethren, suppose that every member of this congregation were to come forward and renounce the use of this pernicious liquor, would no effect be



produced? Suppose that ye were all to come forward, as with the voice of one man, and set up a witness against this crying sin, and declare that you will abandon that which is never better than useless, and in almost every case pernicious. Do this, my brethren, (and I charge you, if you believe that it would do good, that ye take heed how ye do it not): do this, I say; and let it be acted up to steadily and consistently, and the voice of its testimony would be heard and would be effectual, would work its way by degrees, even into the lowest of the courts which surround this church: its voice would be heard, the harbinger of blessing, in the domestic circle, in the blessings of a peaceful, happy home, where now peace and happiness are not: nay more, its voice would be heard, not only in time, but in eternity itself. It has been truly said, that every man is a benefactor to his country who makes a single blade of grass to grow where no blade grew before: and in the same spirit we say, that the whole community owes a debt of gratitude to every man who diminishes, by a single drop, that flood of liquid death which has inundated our land.

And that good would result we have abundant proof. We have proof that the blessing of God *has* rested on Temperance Societies, wherever they have been established. To mention one fact: in the United States of America, the yearly consumption of spirits came down from five million gallons to one million gallons in six years. The effects in the American army and navy are equally successful. And here in England, the societies are increasing in number, increasing in extent, increasing in usefulness. The time will not allow me to state particulars: but we cannot see why what has been done in America should not be done in England. We are sure that if the subject be warmly taken up—if the trumpet of alarm be blown from the pulpit throughout the land—if the Church and people of God be awakened to their peril, to their hope, to their duty—we may look for an ample harvest of good. We have already one hundred thousand members in England and Wales and we call on you to come forward to the help of the Lord against the mighty. We trust that you will enrol your names; we entreat you that you will consider the subject, convince yourselves of its utility, and act upon the conviction. There is no other exertion of Christianity which has gone half the length in checking the progress of intemperance: you know of nothing which has been more effectual: and we beseech you not to hold back from becoming members of an institution which is manifestly blessed by the grace of Jesus Christ. And recollect that neutrality is hostility; “He that is not with me is *against* me.” Recollect the noble declaration of Paul—and O! be prepared to act in the spirit of it—“If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”

It may be objected to the Temperance Societies, that they impose vows upon the consciences of men which the Gospel does not authorize. But I say, that Christianity itself is one great Temperance Society—temperance from sin, and therefore from drunkenness among the rest: and why not write it down as well as profess it? In the Temperance Declaration you merely declare the conviction of your mind: and if you are convinced and resolved in your mind, in the sight of God, it cannot be wrong to record that resolution in the sight of men. We would set before you the example of Israel of old, when, in the reign of

Asa, they made a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart.

Again it may be objected, that we lead men to make these Temperance resolutions who afterwards break them; and thus lead them to add the guilt of a falsehood to the sin of drunkenness. There may be, and doubtless are, cases in which the Temperance members forfeit their word: but let us remember that there is nothing good which man's corrupt heart will not abuse; and that if men will turn that which should have been for their good into an occasion of fresh sin, the guilt lies at their own door. Ah, brethren, the reason why the Temperance resolution, and every other good resolution, is broken, is simply this: you make them in your own strength, and not in that strength which alone can support you in your intentions—even the grace of God. And we nothing doubt but that if we act in this spirit, He who approved and blessed the Rechabites for observing the rule laid down by their father, will approve, and bless, and render effectual all our prayerful and faithful endeavours in this good work.

I trust that what has been said has been sufficient to show you, in the first place, the necessity of doing something; and, secondly, to induce you to take the steps we propose, both for your own sakes, and the sakes of your fellow-creatures. My Christian brethren, we most earnestly recommend this subject to your consideration, and the consideration of the respectable and well-informed inhabitants, through whose influence we may hope to work downwards by degrees. I do entreat you to pay serious attention to this subject. Think of the extent of the evil: be convinced that some exertion is necessary: and be not unwilling to undergo a little self-denial when the temporal and eternal peace, not only of your brethren, but it may be of yourselves, is at stake. Look at the example of Him, who laid aside the crown of glory, and the empire of Deity, that he might come down to the womb, the manger, the cross, the grave, for you; and learn to look, not on your own things, but on the things of others also. Let that spirit of love to the bodies and souls of men which was in Christ Jesus, dwell also in you. Seek to make others happy—you will but secure your own. Explain to your children, workmen, and servants, the nature of these institutions. Be not dismayed because false opinions, bad habits, self-interest, and obstinacy, are set in array against this plan of reformation. Every good design will be opposed: I had almost said it could not be good unless it were. for the prince of this world will struggle and contend for his kingdom, even under the garb of an angel of light. And let any little self-denial, ridicule, or shame, you may meet with, stir you up to more prayer, to greater zeal, to deeper diligence in the work and cause of Christ.

And to you, my poorer brethren, I would add one closing word. Let me most earnestly recommend this society to your notice. We do not want your money—we want you: and let not any of you say, we are about to rob you of your comforts. No; we invite you to separate from the most ungodly practice the world can offer. We want to lead you away from the nightly revel, and the company of the scoffer. We plead with you the cause of your wives and children, and the comforts of a happy home. We would not have your honest,

hard-earned wages go to build up those splendid nurseries of sin, those gin-temples which so disgrace our streets. No ; but we would have you awake up to the dignity of men ; we would have you live and die as Christians, as children of God, as heirs of immortality ; we would have you reap that blessing which God has offered to all who walk in his ways and fear him : “ For thou shalt eat of the labours of thine hands : O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be. Thy wife shall be as the fruitful vine, upon the walls of thine house ; thy children like the olive branches round about thy table. Lo, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the **Lord**.”

## PROVING AND HOLDING FAST THE TRUTH.

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REV. T. MYERS, A.M.

ST. VEDAST'S, FOSTER LANE, CHEAPSIDE, APRIL 5, 1835\*.

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"Prove all things, hold fast that which is good."—1 THESSALONIANS, v. 21.

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THE revelation of our God commends itself as much to the reason, as to the faith of mankind. The Bible—that book whence all ministerial instruction must be derived—was written by men inspired by God to make known his will unto the fallen. The teachings of this Book are addressed to every unit of the teeming myriads who walk this earth. It brings unto them the awful message of their ruin, and the consoling message of their restoration. It brings down to each one of us, from the throne of the Highest, the majestic announcement that we all have souls as well as bodies—that, when we have travelled onwards a few weary years through this ensnaring wilderness, there lies beyond the grave an unseen land, where the righteous of mankind shall enjoy for ever the smile of their Creator, and where the sinners of this earth shall endure for ever the flashings of his wrath.

This revelation of the will of the Highest gives us glimpses of his perfect purity, of his glorious holiness, of his relentless justice, and of his boundless love. It brings us the melancholy history of our former glory, and of our present degradation. We read what man was in the early days of creation's freshness, and what he now is after centuries of rebellion. It shews us both the almightiness of the God we have offended, and the utter hopelessness of our turning aside the sword of his justice. But the revelation which tells us that we cannot atone for sin, or robe ourselves in purity, or win back our crown, brings tidings of an atonement offered, and a righteousness wrought out, and the crown won back, and a free way of access opened up unto the mercy-seat.

And this revelation—thus given unto the sons of men in all its fulness, and in all its freeness—appeals unto them as beings of *reason*, as well as of feeling. Though the Almighty hath a right to command as he pleases—though he hath ever equipped his special messengers with the sanctions of sign and of wonder, that men might never be deceived in the voice of the speaker—still he hath ever invited them to scrutinize the message; he has urged them to "prove all things," and to "hold fast that which is good."

And if you ask, brethren, the reason why we are all bound to attend to the words of this Book, then we remind you, that to each of us there is a soul; and that this soul is a guilty and a deathless thing; that while dwelling in its earthly tabernacle, it contracts each hour fresh stains of pollution, and when it hath

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\* Introductory Discourse at the Afternoon Lectureship.



completed its pilgrimage through life, "it is appointed for all men once to die and after death the judgment." If the sinners of mankind could put off for ever this appointment to die, and kill the soul with the same weapons which will kill the body—there would be little need of proving what is good for the soul, or of holding it fast. But this judgment after death—this setting up a throne—this gathering before a judge—this passing away of the tribes of the ungodly to destruction—this calling up of the hosts of the righteous to blessedness—it is this which lays hold upon the conscience, and summons our attention to search out what is good.

It is the special duty of us who are appointed as the instructors of souls in God's revelation, to open up before the people among whom we labour the whole oracles of God; to listen earnestly for the message of the Spirit; and then to give it forth, without pause, without fear, without compromise, and without distortion. We must add nothing to it; we must subtract nothing from it; we must not disguise it, through policy; we must not pare it down, through fearfulness. And yet, on the other hand, it does not become the ministers of the sanctuary to dogmatize with harshness, and thus to force upon mankind any system of doctrines or of duties; but rather to urge each one for himself, by every motive which can stir an accountable being to "prove all things," and then to "hold fast that which is good."

But without further preface we hasten to make that division of our subject, by which, under God's blessing, it may be rendered profitable to you all. We would lay before you, first, some few among the "all things" which may be proved "good;" and, secondly, the encouragement to "hold fast" these good things when proved. And may the Lord the Spirit—the only teacher of the faithful—lead us safely away from all error, and guide us securely into all truth!

First, SOME FEW OF THE "ALL THINGS," WHICH MAY BE PROVED "GOOD."

We may, first of all, remark, that it is not our intention this afternoon to offer you any proof that the Bible is the Word of God. Not, indeed, that we shrink from the inquiry into the witnesses, so many and so mighty, wherewith the Almighty hath demonstrated that the Bible is from heaven; but because it would be impossible in a single discourse to treat the subject with the copiousness it demands. We hope to have many future occasions of explaining to you the evidences of our religion, both external and internal. Many, we trust, are satisfied on this point; they can say with David, "The Word of the Lord is *tried*:" they have tried it in affliction and in health—in the darkness of their sorrow, and in the full brilliancy of their joy: and they have proved it "good," and felt it precious. We must, however, assume this point this afternoon, and pass on to shew, how certain doctrines and certain duties which we deem the very corner-stones of man's salvation, may be proved to be "good," and must be "held fast" as precious.

The Lord Almighty, who demands the homage of every being throughout the outspread of creation, has revealed unto us *his own character*. He is "the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." He is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," "righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." He

is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth;" but He will not justify the wicked, and will "by no means clear the guilty." He is "the King, eternal, immortal, invisible"—"the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see."

He is our Creator, and we have disobeyed him. He is our King, and we have spurned his authority, defied his laws, and joined the traitor bands of the Apostate. We have ruined ourselves through sin, and have neither the will nor the power to return unto His favour. Our first father was a being of purity and holiness. No false bias swayed his will; no dark shadow clouded his understanding. His was the image of his Maker in beauty and uprightness. He was free to stand, and free to fall. One test of obedience was given unto him; but the trial, though apparently trivial, o'er-mastered him at once. and thus, by one fatal act, he tore from his brow the garland of immortality, and twined the night-shade of death around his temples. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." When Adam fell, evil rushed into his soul, and defiled its faculties; pollution invaded his body, and corroded its energies; so that he who had been unsullied in spirit, and undecaying in frame, became instantly guilty in God's sight, subject to his curse, and meriting his wrath. And from the guilty parent has sprung a guilty race. We all, like lost sheep, have erred and strayed from original righteousness: we have wandered far away from the regions of God's favour, and have no energies by which to travel back over the wastes of alienation.

Now these uncompromising statements, as to God's awful justice, and our own utter degradation, may be "proved" as fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. "But what need," it may be asked, "to concern ourselves with these points of divinity?" Now we undertake to shew, not only that these things may be proved true, but also that they may be proved "*good*."

You and I, brethren, are placed in this region of sin and of wretchedness, as beings of a high and a glorious destiny. While we dwell in the land on this side the Jordan of death, we may, perhaps, be ignorant of the God who made us, and of the woe in store for us: but inasmuch as this Jordan of death must be passed, and then there can be no escaping the stern sword of justice, or the keen glance of vengeance, it is "good" for the soul to prove for itself its state before God; to know the perfect purity of the law which it has broken, and the utter hopelessness of any efforts it can make to purchase forgiveness. It is "good" for the soul to experience the terrors of the law in this life, that it may escape their execution in the next life. It is "good" for the soul to feel and lament the heinousness of its guilt, that it may seek, ere it be too late, the only way of atonement. It is "good" to know, and to feel thoroughly assured, that the Holy One and the Awful One, is also merciful and gracious; that he has devised a plan by which the guilt of sin may be washed away, and the remission of sins, offered fully and freely to every outcast of mankind.

It may be proved, on the sure warrant of inspiration, that the Father of the human family pitied us in our lost and ruined estate, and hath devised a sure plan for satisfying His own justice, and restoring man to his long-lost image of glory. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son to die the just for the unjust; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish

but have everlasting life." This announcement contains the very pith and marrow of the glad tidings of our salvation.

When the world by its wisdom knew not God, in process of time the Creator of the universe—the God who made every living, breathing, moving thing—clothed Himself in human nature—submitted to be born of a pure Virgin (thus becoming Son of God and Son of Man)—endured the sufferings of infancy, childhood, youth, and manhood—fulfilled the law in its every tittle—worked out a perfect righteousness—yielded himself to buffeting, and scorn, and agony—atoned by his death for the sins of the whole world—became the curse, the sin-offering which your sins and mine demanded for their expiation—grappled with death, and hell, and Satan—remained awhile in the grave a conqueror at rest—and then sprung up from its cold custody by the might of the indwelling Deity—presented his human nature pure and spotless unto the Father—ascended unto his mediatorial throne; where now he lives, the Advocate of all his pilgrim followers—the Intercessor who will save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by him.

These statements, brethren, in the course of our ministrations among you, it will be our duty to prove point by point. They are far too numerous to be entered on at length this afternoon: at present we will only ask you, Is it not "good," when the soul has just caught a glimpse of its sinful estate, and of the awfulness of its offended Judge, to feel that this Judge has acted as a merciful Father; that he hath pitied it in its ruin, and provided for its rescue? Is it not "good" to feel that our sorrows and our guilt have been borne away by another, all-powerful to atone, all-able to sympathize? Is it not good to feel, that, though poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked, we have an all-prevailing Advocate with the Father, who has reconciled the world unto its God; who shed his blood for every single unit of the tribes of mankind; who hath defeated Satan; and hath thrown wide open the doors of that prison-house wherein Satan chains down the millions of our race?

When we are thoroughly convinced as to these first principles of revelation—the depth of our ruin; the alone method of our restoration; the character, offices, and work of the Mediator; the perfect Godhead and the perfect manhood of this our Surety—the slain, the risen, the crucified, the glorified; when we have listened to the tidings of this full and free redemption, adapted so exactly to the wants of every sin-burdened soul; then must we proceed most diligently to inquire, how we may each *individually* become partakers of the blessing. It will never advantage me to prove that a Saviour hath died for me, and a pardon is offered me, unless I know how I may seek this Saviour, and apply for this pardon. True, the door of my dungeon may be opened; but unless I know the way to break my chain, and cast off my prison-clothes, I shall never be admitted among the citizens of the Eternal City.

The Almighty, in his Word, represents me as by nature a criminal, through breaking his law; and hence, as a prisoner, chained down by his justice. Hence some change must pass upon my feelings, and my affections, and my character, before I can be admitted as a guest at his table. So strongly is the necessity of this change laid down in the Word, that it is called "a second birth"—a "putting off the old man with its affections and lusts," and "putting on the new man created afresh, in righteousness and true holiness." "Except a man

be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." By what process, then, is this change to be effected? How is this slave of sin to be transformed into Jehovah's freed-man? After representing the soul as actually dead in trespasses and sins, it cannot be called upon to stir itself in its charnel-house, and lay hold by its own palsied strength of life eternal.

Now, the Almighty has not left this part of the economy of grace unprovided for. The same God, who as the Father in Heaven, first loved us in the earliest days of our ruin—who clothed himself in flesh, and as God the Son paid down the ransom, abolished the curse, and won back the heritage of glory—this same God still carries on the work of free grace, and as God the Spirit undertakes the special office of *acting on the wills* of mankind; of enlightening their blindness; of shewing them their danger, and their refuge; of turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. This Holy Spirit addresses himself to every one who hath an ear. He is come to convince and to reprove the world, to alarm the conscience, to awaken it from its death-sleep, and to become the Converter, the Sanctifier, the Purifier, and the Comforter of the saints.

And while this One God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is thus engaged in rescuing us from death, he demands of each conditions of acceptance. He will not save us in our sins. The Father will not accept us in our polluted state: he will have us cleansed and sanctified before he will admit us into glory. And this cleansing and purifying we must obtain by putting our trust in the Great Atonement. He is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." "Present your bodies," says St. Paul, "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God," "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." "By their fruits ye shall know them." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

It may be further proved, that though the man must believe, the man repent, and the man work the deeds of love and holiness, yet God must give the faith, and the repentance, and the newness of life: so that from first to last salvation is entirely of free grace. Man is of himself unable to procure, by any merits of his own, the favour of his God: he is justified solely through the merits of his Redeemer. The Spirit unites him to that body of which the Redeemer is the Head: his faith is the instrument on his part by which he becomes united to the source of spiritual life; and his good works are necessary in proof that he does live. All pretensions to being born of God, when no fruits of love to God or man appear, when the world can discern no difference between the daily life of the ungodly and of the professor of godliness, are vain and worthless. Saving, justifying faith, must be a working, practical, and energizing thing: and it must work through love: it must establish the law; it must assimilate the mind to the mind of Christ Jesus; it must go forth daily to battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil; and it must, upon the whole, win the mastery over the world; otherwise it is false, and hypocritical, and delusive. And when once the sinner has been so renewed by the Spirit, that he hath put forth his hand, and laid hold on the Rock of ages, then what tears of repentance, what sighs of contrition, what struggles against corruption, will daily be manifest! The new-born energies will grow and flourish; the process of sanctification will be



gradually going on; the privileges of adoption will be more and more precious; till at length the new-born babe will grow up unto the full stature of the spiritual man: and, awaiting in peace the hour of his departure, be taken to his rest; and on the resurrection morn he shall spring up burnished and beautiful, and walk to and fro, as a king and a priest, through the paradise of God.

And is it not "good" for the contrite sinner to be able to "prove" from the Word, that the Creator of all things calls himself his Father; pities and loves him even in the days of wickedness; encourages him to come at once just as he is, without any preparation of worthiness, or works, or merits; urges him to apply at once for a spirit of repentance and of faith, to the appointed Advocate of sinners; offers him the grace of His Holy Spirit to convert, and renew, and sanctify, and preserve him, and unite him, once and for ever, to the blessed company of the righteous. For these are righteous, not through any doings or desert of their own, but through membership with Him who is our Living Head—the Lord our righteousness.

Having thus treated, but briefly, some few of the "all things" that may be proved good—we must defer others till some future opportunities. The approaching festival of Easter will necessarily connect itself with the scenes of the Crucifixion and Atonement—with the doctrine of the resurrection, the ascension, and the out-pouring of the Spirit: and we shall ever be anxious on festival Sundays to draw your attention towards the event to be specially celebrated: for these special occasions should be made days of festival for the soul.

But we must pass on to point out, secondly, SOME ENCOURAGEMENTS TO "HOLD FAST" THESE GOOD THINGS WHEN PROVED.

Let each hearer before me be mindful to prove for himself the truth of what has been spoken. Let him offer up the silent prayer—"Open thou mine eyes, O Lord, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law:" and then when he hath waited thus humbly for the Spirit's teaching, let him be careful to "hold fast" the soul-saving truth.

When thou hast proved that thy God is a being of justice as well as of mercy, then hold fast the truth; lest the deceitfulness of thy heart persuade thee that he will overlook thy failings as unworthy His notice. When thou art tempted to pride thyself on thy freedom from gross sin, and upon the fewness of thy failings, and the multitude of thy virtues, then dash away the delusive draught of flattery, and "hold fast" the truth that thou art ruined and wretched in the sight of thy Maker; that in thine own natural estate thou art unable and unwilling to cleave heartily unto the Lord. Atonement for thine iniquities thou must not attempt: the worthiness of thy works thou must not plead: thy sorrow for the past, and thy promises of amendment for the future, cannot of themselves propitiate God's favour. "Hold fast," then, unto the mighty truth, that there is but one way for a sinner to come acceptably unto the mercy-seat; even through Him who is appointed the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He only can grant what the sinner needs. He only can satisfy what the law demands. Christ Jesus the Lord is Messiah unto the Jew, and King and High Priest unto the Gentile. "Look unto him and be ye saved all the

ends of the earth." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." "*Whosoever* believeth"—"Hold fast," we encourage you, unto this word "*whosoever*." There is no restriction in the free mercy of Jehovah: the blood of the Mediator was shed, and the body of the Mediator was broken for you, and for me, and for every outcast of the family of Adam. "Hold fast" also unto the soul-saving truth, that a man cannot believe without the indwelling of God the Spirit. He is the only converter, and sanctifier, and comforter of souls; call upon him in every time of need, and he will send down sufficiency of grace.

And do we need encouragements thus to "hold fast?" Then turn to the epistles to the seven Churches of Asia, and ponder on the promises to all who "hold fast" unto the end. Days of weariness and days of fainting may be in store for us all; but "to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." "Remember therefore how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent." There are blessings in store for thee, the glory of which surpasses all description. Amid the storms and billows of life, thou shalt find the security of having thy bark lashed to the Rock of ages.

"Hear, once more, the message of thy God. "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." "Thy crown," says thy Lord. And can it be that, after proving man thus helpless, and guilty, and ruined, he should be told of a crown as his own, and a kingdom as his own? Can it be that, after having humbled the natural man in the dust of corruption, we are to exalt the spiritual man to the glory of immortality? This, brethren, is the mighty encouragement to hold fast. Though thou art now dead in trespasses and sins; though thou art self-righteous and self-satisfied yet once let the Spirit stir thee, and unite thee by a living faith unto that body of which Christ Jesus is the Head, then art thou an heir of God—joint heir with the Son of God—and shall sit on his throne even as he is seated on his Father's throne: and however wretched, and forlorn, and persecuted, *here*, thine shall be a crown, and a diadem, and robes of glory on that bright morning of springing from the tomb—the magnificent coronation day of the saints; and then shalt thou offer this song of thanksgiving: "O Lord, we praise thee that thou didst urge us to 'prove all things;' for now, by thy grace, we have held fast; now, by thy grace, we have won our crown."

## YIELDING OURSELVES UNTO GOD

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REV. J. HAMBLETON, A.M.

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"Yield yourselves unto God."—ROMANS, vi. 12.

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THESE words exhort to what is the bounden duty of every Christian. The Bible allows no compromise with sin; no halting between two opinions; no neutrality in the Christian warfare. It makes, indeed, allowance for timid doubts and feeble efforts: it provides for cases of temptation and depression; it tells how the weak may be made strong, the fainting revived, and the backslider restored. Yet, as to the grand choice, the resolution, the course of life, God in his Word speaks very plainly: "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal—if the world, if Mammon, if pleasure—follow them." And so here in our text: "Yield yourselves unto God." The duty, and the motive which persuades us to this duty, shall be our present subject.

But why is this our present subject? I answer, It is one important to all of us at any time; and not the least to my young friends preparing for confirmation. If there are any here who think they hear too much of confirmation at this time, I must beg of them to bear with me. It is a serious thing to have the ministerial responsibility of preparing more than one hundred souls for the public profession of the Christian faith: I feel that they need all, and more than all, I can do, by public and private instruction, exhortation, and prayer, lest any among them should, after all, fail of the grace of God. I feel that such a season may be eminently blessed to many others also. The Christianity they are going to profess, is what some of us have professed for years past. What ought to be penitence, faith, obedience, and devotedness in them, ought to be of the very same character in ourselves. Hence I do expect, through God's grace, a season of revival of genuine religion amongst us. Looking for that grace, I do, and will, hope, that this may prove quite a spring-tide to our congregation: that while the warm beams of the vernal sun are every day causing the buds to swell, and the blossoms to burst forth, in the natural world around us, the brighter beams of the Sun of Righteousness will shine into all our hearts; revive and quicken the work of grace within; re-animate the aged with the fervour of youth; fill with new energy the Christian in middle life; and so penetrate and pervade all our youth, that we may have from among them a large accession, not of Christians in name only—not of churchmen, or protestants, or religious professors, in name only; but of humble penitents, true believers; meek, intelligent, and devoted Christians, prepared by the grace

of God to serve him faithfully, and to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things.

Now in order, my brethren, to have such a season, many prayers must be offered up. The youth must pray: their parents and friends—I hope I need not say—must be peculiarly urgent in prayer: ministers, I am sure, ought to pray. And with prayer, if sincere, will follow corresponding exertion. Peculiar duties now devolve on each and all: on *us* to instruct and counsel the young, both in public and in private, with faithfulness and affection: on *parents* to second our endeavours with all that mighty and affectionate authority—the authority of parental love, wherewith God hath kindly intrusted them: and the *young*, I am sure, will feel that, while parents, and friends, and ministers are all active on their behalf, they are not to look on as idle and unconcerned spectators. They have the work of preparation to pursue; the Bible to read and study with new interest; their baptismal vows to consider; their past lives to examine; good resolutions to make; sins to renounce; their course of life to choose; their Saviour to love; and his grace, which can alone enable them for all, to ask for in earnest prayer from day to day.

In this spirit, my brethren, of prayer, with determination for corresponding exertions, let us all consider the duty recommended in the text; and the motives which, with God's blessing, will persuade us to the duty.

THE DUTY is simply this: "Yield yourselves unto God." In these few words you have the sum and substance, not only of confirmation, but the sum and substance of the whole Christian profession; the sum and substance of the three great promises made for us at baptism, and to be renewed by every one in his own person in after life. For here is comprised the great first promise, *the renunciation of every kind of sin*. Only look at the preceding verse: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Here also comes in the second great promise—*the hearty belief of God's revealed truth*. For when we want motives to yield ourselves unto God, it is there—at the articles of our faith, and the doctrines of our Bible—that we must look: *there* we are taught to know, to love, and to trust God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in their varied offices in the covenant of grace: *there* we have the mighty motives of the Father's love, of the compassion of the Saviour, of the grace and influence of the Holy Spirit. And here, in our text, we have also the third great promise of the Christian—*obedience to all God's commands*, in their wide, extensive, practical application: "Yield yourselves unto God." Submit to his easy yoke, give way to his authority; follow his commands. There is a peculiar tenderness in the exhortation, "Yield yourselves unto God." It is not "Submit yourselves as slaves unto God;" but, "Yield yourselves:" be led, be inclined, be moved, be persuaded, to give up yourselves unto God, at his kind and gracious invitations.

And this duty of yielding yourselves unto God, is, we must admit, one of very wide and extensive meaning. We are to yield *ourselves*. That, of course, must include all we have and all we are—our body, soul, and spirit; the outer



and the inner man: all talents and endowments intrusted to us—our time, our health, our strength—all are to be cheerfully yielded unto God. To all these (on which I shall presently enlarge more particularly) to all these we are particularly bound and obliged—graciously obliged; whenever, and at whatever period of life, we truly and heartily enter into covenant with God, through the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ: we are bound to this at baptism. For what, after all, is baptism, but the solemn dedication of ourselves to God, with earnest prayer for his regenerating grace, accompanied with the pouring of water, the consecrated sign, token, and pledge, of the purifying, refreshing, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; and with solemn promise on our part, flowing from the promise of God, to give ourselves (and surely it is the least, and, at best, a poor return we can make) to give ourselves truly to God: to renounce what he forbids; to believe what he promises; to obey what he enjoins.

But this great dedication of ourselves was made for most of us, I suppose, in infancy: and, when rightly understood, a great mercy was there. Only think, my young friends, before you had strength to walk to the house of God, your friends carried you thither, after the example of the pious parents in Judea; who brought their children in their arms to Jesus for his blessing. Before your tongues could speak, or your minds could think, they thought, they spoke, they acted, for what you may now discover, and rejoice to discover, to be for your truest good. “This child,” they say, in faith, and hope, and love—“This child shall be a Christian. If the prayer of faith can obtain for him the blessing of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, he shall be a Christian. If Christian education, from as soon as he shall be able to learn (for that was the promise) can assist to teach him to be a Christian, this child shall be a Christian indeed. If Christian example can conduce to this good end, this child shall be a Christian. Ourselves believers, ourselves rejoicing in the privilege of belonging to Christ, we here solemnly declared in this expressive ordinance, that the highest honour we desire for this child is, that he may ‘fight manfully under the banner of Christ, against sin, the world, and the devil; and continue Christ’s faithful soldier and servant unto his life’s end.’ ”

Since that solemn and interesting occasion many years have now rolled by with us. And what have we been doing? How have we been acting? Has the subsequent part of our life, thus far, been according to that good beginning? Have we, in other words, been renouncing for ourselves all sin, believing all God’s truth, obeying all God’s commands? Has the prayer of faith once offered for us been answered? Has it, as yet, been the prayer of our own hearts for ourselves? Is the old Adam, the corrupt nature, buried and gone, and the new and holy nature truly and effectually raised? Have we, in short, “yielded ourselves unto God?” If one may speak for all, the answer would be, No: we have loved what we ought to have renounced, and served what we ought to have shunned; neglected the truth of God, and transgressed his commandments. The sinfulness of early life is a very humbling consideration: for it might have been supposed, that at that tender age we should not have had boldness enough to sin; that the loveliness of the character of God would have attracted us; and that the season of our lives, when hope was more ardent, the affections more alive, and the heart more susceptible of gratitude, would indeed have been dedicated to God—the God of hope, the God of love, the God

and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But it was not so with all of us. "Foolishness"—says the Scripture (and experience confirms the words of Scripture)—"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child:" "Childhood and youth are vanity." With too many amongst us, any folly was in those days, preferred to God: prayer too often was looked on as a task; the Bible as a dull book; and sin was thought something manly: and those energies which, if sanctified by grace, might have honoured the Gospel and profited men, were spent and wasted in sinful rebellion against God. Many often think lightly, indeed, of youthful sins, and treat them as mere acts of indiscretion. But sin in the sight of God is always sinful. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." There is God's recorded testimony of the sinfulness of the vain and foolish imaginations in which youth is so apt to indulge. And it is to be remarked, how very deeply some of the most eminent characters of Scripture appear to have lamented their youthful sins. Thus David: "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord." Thus Job: "'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.'" Thus in that beautiful example of penitence, given in the prophet Jeremiah: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed; I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did hear the reproach of my youth." Then, again, in the same prophet, how affecting the penitential review of youth: "We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us; for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth, even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God." One, also, of the most affecting of our Lord's parables, is that of the prodigal son; the rash and thoughtless youth, who, according to the language still too common in the world, was only rather too gay and indiscreet; but when his conscience was touched, and his eyes were opened, and he came to himself, what was his confession? "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

But here let not the young misunderstand. I am not confounding with sin, the natural cheerfulness, and the amiable vivacity of youth: neither am I condemning the ardour of character, and the flow of spirits, which usually mark that season of life. Nay, I would say to them, Be cheerful; be active; be ardent; be happy; be joyful: but still remember God, thy Creator, in the days of thy youth: remember the Saviour, who invited the young to come to him: remember to pray for the Holy Spirit, to create anew the sin-loving heart; to sanctify all natural gifts; to turn the full current of thy youthful affections towards God and goodness; to incline thee to attend to his affectionate exhortation, "My son, give me thy heart."

But here very many of us have failed; some more, and others less. But whoever has least failed in love and obedience towards God, and has the least given way to sin, vanity, and folly, has cause for deep humiliation, and penitential confession before God. Every ingenuous young person remembers, with peculiar self-reproach, an offence committed against kind parents; the

having trifled with their feelings, they disregarded their warnings; the omission of what would have pleased them; the word, the look, the temper, that evidently distressed them, and gave them pain. And if now they are far off, or if death has removed them into eternity, so that we never can again gladden their hearts, the thought is peculiarly affecting. But now I call in God's name, for all this, and far more than this, for God. Every offence committed against the just and proper commands of earthly parents, was, in fact, an offence against Him who commanded them to be honoured: and if they, who themselves were imperfect and sinful, yet were grieved and displeased by the rebellious temper, the obstinate spirit, or unkind behaviour, what must God be, who is perfectly holy; and who, being an omniscient Spirit, knows infinitely more than they ever knew of us; who saw us when they could not; who heard our words when we should have been ashamed to utter them, before them; who was witness to deeds which their presence would have altogether restrained? Our offences, alas, against them are much aggravated by the recollection of their kindness. How did they protect and watch over our infancy? What labour and self-denial did they endure for us! What sympathy did they express in our little sorrows! What patience, forgiveness, and unwearied love did they evince! Then think of God your heavenly Father. Consider his forbearance, his goodness, his protecting care, his ever-watchful providence, his offers of mercy, his invitations of grace, his entreaties for reconciliation and salvation! And yet against Him, our heavenly Father, our unwearied friend, our best and truest benefactor, we have dared to sin again and again. Shame on our hardness of heart, we feel not more deeply the unspeakable ingratitude of sin! Every one of the perfections of God makes sin against him appear more sinful. Is God perfect in *holiness*? How must he abhor sin in his creatures! Is he perfect in *justice*? How must he vindicate the honour of his broken law! Is he so *powerful* that he can create or annihilate the world with a single word? What wonderful forbearance that he did not crush us when we sinned against him! Is he full of *love*, and infinite in *compassion*? Therefore is sin the more vile; rebellion against a gracious monarch being far more heinous than against a cruel tyrant.

But still, my brethren, though the recollection of the solemn engagements of baptism, coupled with the review of our past lives, must surely convince us all of the humbling truth, that we have not yielded ourselves as we ought to God; what a comfort to remember, that one of the great fundamental truths of Christianity—into the belief of which we were baptized, in which we have been instructed, and in which we are now, if not before, invited, yea entreated, to exercise a personal faith, is this—that sin, however much, however great, may be pardoned; ingratitude may yet be forgiven; and that our God, though holy and just, may freely pardon us, rebels as we have been before him! The gracious way provided is in and through Jesus Christ, who though the eternal Son of God, and equal with the Father in happiness and glory, yet deigned to take our nature into union with his Godhead: and here, on this earth, the spot which man's sin must have rendered vile in his sight; here, in the depth of humiliation, and scorn, and infamy; here, by obedience and suffering, even unto death, (as we have to commemorate this week,) here he worked out a full and complete righteousness to be put on all who believe on him, comprehending

the pardon of their sins, the acceptance of their persons, perfect reconciliation with God, and an interest in the great New Testament promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, to work in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

If some among you just now feel the recollection of youthful sins thrill you with compunction, now let the full and gracious offer of redemption thrill you with joy. Accept heartily and truly of Jesus Christ as your Saviour: come to him, that is, as sinners: rely simply on his merits: plead his promises in prayer: confess his name before men: seek to know him more, and to be yet more and more closely and vitally connected with him by faith, love, and prayer: and you shall have pardon; yea, thus coming you *have* pardon already. God is no longer angry with you; his anger is turned away: the clouds which sin and unbelief had raised are dispersed; the smile of God's favour breaks on you; you are his, and he is yours. Henceforth how different a thing is life! Not a mere season to be trifled and frittered away in the round of amusement; not merely a time for amassing gold, and silver, and perishable goods: no, nor yet the theatre for the display of vanity and ambition, in their thousand varied forms. Love, in the Christian, united by a living faith to Christ, and filled with love to him, assumes a nobler object: it is to be alive to his praise; to be devoted to his service; to be spent in fulfilling his will, and in glorifying his name. If you truly believe on him you must and will love him: and if you love him you must and will obey the exhortation of our text, and "Yield ourselves unto God." For this was his object, the love of Christ concerning us: "He died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God:" "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."

Now here, I trust, you will allow, I have shewn AN ADEQUATE MOTIVE to induce you, through the grace of God, to yield yourselves unto him. I have not rested my argument on natural religion—that God is your Creator and Preserver, and therefore has a right to your obedience, though there is some force in that appeal. I rest not the argument on mere moral grounds—the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice: though there is some meaning also in that. And I urge not mere topics of temporal expediency—that in serving God you will consult for your health, comfort, and usefulness to society. But, if it were possible, I would lead every one of you to the foot of the Redeemer's cross. "Behold, *there*," I would say to the most hesitating; "behold the mighty motive: see in that suffering, bleeding, dying Saviour, a motive which ought to be sufficient to induce you to renounce all sin, to love God, and to 'yield yourselves unto him,' from a principle of gratitude. Let his patient silence in suffering plead: let his wounds and bruises have a voice: let his bowing his head and dying move your affections and hearts: and to what but this—'Yield yourselves unto God.'"

But he is also risen, and ascended, and sits on the right hand of God. These are all great and noble articles of our faith; and each of them forms an additional motive to us to yield ourselves unto God. Rise with him from the sleep and death of sin; ascend with him in heart and spirit. Begin, in prayer for that grace of the Holy Spirit, which he delights to send down—begin *now* a life of devotedness, holiness, and love. Enter, dear brethren, into the noble realities



of your religion. Let the great motives of Christianity not slumber unheeded in your Bibles ; but bring them (nay, rather pray God to bring them ; for it is His work to do it aright)—bring them so to bear on your consciences, so to be mixed up with your first principles of action, that they may animate you to all gratitude, obedience, patience, and perseverance.

Will you then (for this is the question) will you be the decided Christian ? You see what is meant—Will you “yield yourselves unto God ?” It does not mean, Will you be gloomy and melancholy ? It does not mean, Will you retire from social life, into the solitude of the desert, or the dreariness of the monastery ? but, will you be the Christian indeed ? Will you, wherever you are thrown by the providence of God, endeavour faithfully to love and serve Jesus Christ ? Will you at his bidding, cheerfully renounce the sins and vanities which cannot make you truly happy, or he who is your friend, your best friend, will not ask you to renounce them. Will you believe on him ; which is not merely a duty, but a great and blessed privilege ? Will you be taught by his Spirit ; be made humble, renewed, contented, consistent, and rejoicing Christians ? Will you carry a Christian spirit of love and gentleness into all your duties ? Will you (for again we come to that point) will you, “yield yourselves unto God ?”

Now that question is proposed to every one of you individually. Whose will you be ? Whom will you serve ? Two masters are offered you, whichever way you look : God and the world ; God and the flesh ; God and Satan. Deliberate, choose, decide. But, O, if entreaties, if advice, if prayers of ours can avail, you will all, if you have not made the good choice before, now choose for God, and decide to be, through his grace, the faithful and decided Christian.

We do not wish to conceal, that there are difficulties in carrying out this choice. Our Saviour himself advises his disciples well to count the cost. We know that it is not a fashionable thing to give up ourselves to God. We know that in being truly pious there is a struggle to be maintained ; a fight to be fought ; self-denial to be exercised. We know all this ; and it would be dishonest to wish to conceal it from you. But still, brethren, the motives, the grand and mighty motives, of the love of God, of the death of Christ, of his intercession with the Father, of the energetic grace of his Spirit ; the heaven which he is gone to prepare—a place full of greatness, blessedness, and glory, stretching beyond the narrow vale of mortal life, into the boundless regions of eternity ; here are motives which ought to outweigh all difficulties, and to decide every one of your hearts for God.

Where, then, are the youths who will give in their names in secret to God this very night ? Do it with deliberation ; for it is a matter of vast importance : do it with much prayer ; for God by his Holy Spirit alone can effectually enable you to “yield yourselves unto him :” do it with great humility ; for our own sinfulness, and the freeness of God’s love in Christ Jesus, alike concur to humble us : do it with real faith ; do it with grateful love ; yea, do it with joyful praise.

You, my brethren, who have made this good profession of giving yourselves up to God publicly years ago, allow me now to ask, Are you confirmed, decided, and real Christians ? Review at this season your own covenant engagements with God. Consider your Christian privileges ; examine and compare whether your life and spirit at all correspond therewith. Let none of us forget, it is

not baptism, it is not confirmation, it is not human ordinances, however excellent, that will serve. There must be personal penitence for sin ; personal faith in the Redeemer : personal earnest prayer ; and personal devotedness to God. Have we any thing of this ? Then let all be deepened and confirmed. Come not, we say to you—Come not, again, afresh to the rite of confirmation. Your public profession of faith and devotedness to God has been made before many witnesses : but act up to that profession ; carry out that devotedness ; renounce your sins ; give up the world's vanities ; mortify the lusts of the flesh, as you have promised to do : obey God's commands in their full spiritual sense : and in order to walk truly, believe from the heart the noble articles of our Christian faith.

May I ask of those present who were confirmed in this parish three years ago, some of them—six years others of them—and eight years others (of whom we would not now lose sight) may I ask of them how they are going on in the Christian life ? Of the numbers who were then confirmed, some have since gone into eternity ; some are removed to distant parts ; some, I have cause to know, and many I would hope, have been going on in a consistent Christian spirit, growing in knowledge, in love to God, and in devotedness to his service. Go on and prosper, I would say to all such : forget the things behind ; reach forward to the things before. You cannot be too decided for God ; you cannot love your Saviour too much ; you cannot renounce sin too entirely. Let your faith become more simple, and it will be yet more influential. Be more in prayer : pray for spiritual affections, and holiness of heart. Show to those around you, that religion is not a mere jargon of words ; not a mere profession of the lips : but by meekness, lowliness, kindness, gentleness, and practical holiness, adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things.

Some among that number, I fear, by continuing in carelessness and sin, are disgracing the public profession they then made. Then were our labours, our instructions, our sermons, our examinations, all thrown away ? We cannot, and we must not, thus give you up. Again we entreat you to “yield yourselves unto God.” For are your consciences easy while you are continuing in sins and vanities, which you have solemnly promised to renounce ? Are you satisfied to go on thus ? Shall the present fresh band of candidates for Christian profession outstrip you in the Christian race ? Are you just where you were years ago ? Nay, that you cannot be ; for if you have been throughout that period, continuing in a careless, sin-loving state, then your habits of sin are become more confirmed ; your hearts more hardened ; and your case, I had almost said, more *desperate* ; but I must retract that word : God forbid that I should consider *any* sinner's case as desperate on this side the grave. The grace of our Lord is still omnipotent : the Saviour is still able to save to the uttermost ; his blood yet can cleanse from all sin. But I have to entreat you, in his strength, and in prayer for his Spirit, to make now another and a vigorous effort. Remember your peace, your happiness, your comfort, yea, your soul's life, are deeply concerned in this request. Only believe aright, and “all things become possible to him that believeth.” We will not, and we must not, give you up.

In regard to our approaching confirmation, should there still be any young persons, who, after much hesitation or diffidence, are at length persuaded and resolved to be confirmed ; let them still come to us for preparation. Should

there be any who have honest doubts and difficulties as to any great point of faith in the Christian religion, it would be both our duty and our pleasure, to assist them to the utmost of our power. I account this one of the peculiar benefits of confirmation, that it brings ministers and their people somewhat more into personal connexion. And if, as I believe, the duties and trials and the afflictions which ministers are called to pass through, besides the benefit of their own souls, are also intended to prepare them to sympathize the better with one and with another of our people, then let us but know your difficulty ; and perhaps in the school of Christ we may have been taught, or from the Scriptures we may have been shewn, what will give you assistance. But let there be none among you who trifle with the religion of Christ. It is not a manly thing to scoff at those truths which good men love, and angels admire, and at which the devils tremble. Weigh and consider the great articles of our faith. Study them, not through the medium of prejudices and misrepresentations ; but as they stand in all their simplicity and majesty, connected with all holiness and comfort in the Holy Scriptures. Study them with prayer for God's enlightening grace : and we shall, I am persuaded, see even those who were sceptical come forward, and rejoice to become, and to avow themselves through God's grace, desirous to be numbered among, his people.

May this, then, be the secret prayer of every one here present, both before leaving this place, and in the privacy of retirement this evening : " Lord, incline me by the great motives of thy Gospel to yield myself more and more unto thee, in body, soul, and spirit ; and to become, through thy grace, the truly confirmed and decided disciple of Christ." Let that resolution thus made to-night, be registered in heaven : let it be publicly made in the confession of Christ, on all due occasions, before men. Renew it solemnly from time to time, especially at the Lord's Supper. Thus live, dear brethren, as God's people, and as his redeemed servants. Thus endeavour, through his grace, to live devotedly, happily, and always rejoicing in the Lord, till death, as his messenger, shall come ; and then again, in another and a sweeter sense, " yield yourselves unto God." It is your Father calls ; let your soul run at his bidding : " Father, I come : Father, into thy hands I commend, I yield, my spirit ; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord thou God of Truth."

## CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY.

REV. W. JAY.

SURREY CHAPEL, MARCH 15, 1835\*.

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“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”  
PHILIPPIANS, ii. 4.

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“EVERY one for himself, and God for us all.” Now is not this a precious maxim? And yet you continually hear it; and it contains, it expresses, it breathes, the very soul, creed, philosophy, morality, and religion of thousands in this vile, selfish, catch-penny world. But you are not to follow the multitude to do evil, but to follow after righteousness, to follow after things by which you may edify one another, and act from principle, and *Christian* principle too. And therefore I bring forward this morning another maxim, and instead of saying, “Every one for himself, and God for us all,” we say, “Every one for *another*, and God for us all.” This was the maxim of our inspired Apostle. Witness his address to the Corinthians: “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth.” And witness the words which I have now read: “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”

If I were to beg a female to be virtuous, or to urge a man not to love money, and not to steal; it would probably be deemed a charge; at least it would be considered as an insinuation. But exhortation, be it remembered, does not always imply censure or reflection; yea, it is not always an excitement to begin, but frequently an encouragement to persevere, and to increase, in well-doing. For when a thing is remarkable and lovely, we always wish it to be more so; and we naturally desire that excellency of every kind may have free course and be glorified. Hear the language of our Apostle to the Thessalonians: “But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more.” And to whom was the passage before us addressed? To the Philippians; a church remarkably dear to the Apostle, and whose members were pre-eminent for the qualification here recommended. You will observe, that this is the only one of all the Apostle’s epistles that contains in it nothing of blame: and never was there a people more disinterested than these Philippians. Observe this in one particular instance—in their liberality towards the Apostle himself: “Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent

\* On behalf of the Surrey Chapel Alms’ Houses.



once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift : but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." And so when they heard that he was a prisoner at Rome, they made a collection of the converts among them, and sent the present to him by the hands of one of their pastors or deacons : and, therefore, says he, " I have all things, and abound : I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all you need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Yet these very people, these unselfish and generous souls, these are the people he admonishes in the words of our text, " Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

You will not wonder, therefore, that I address the same words to the people of Surrey Chapel this morning ; a congregation from the very beginning distinguished by their benevolence, and the praise of whose generosity is in all the churches. Let us then consider what this admonition forbids, and what it enjoins. And while you resolve to avoid the one, and to pursue the other, may the God of peace be with you. Amen.

Let us first endeavour to explain and qualify the admonition as to **WHAT IT FORBIDS**. " Look not every man on his own things." Why not ? Who is likely to look upon them if he does not himself ? Reason and Scripture, then, combine to enforce upon us self-attention.

And therefore you may observe, in the first place, that you may, and you ought, to look upon your own things, as to the *soul* ; to see that this be pardoned and renewed ; that this has a title to heaven, and a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light ; that this be fed with the bread of life, and clothed with the garment of salvation : there, indeed, your care is to be supreme. The one question, which, above every other, you are to ask is, not " What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed ?" but, " What must I do to be saved ?" The salvation of the soul, my dear hearers, is the one thing needful : and therefore you are commanded to " work out your salvation with fear and trembling : " therefore you are commanded to " labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life : " therefore you are commanded, to " Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." " Ah," says Bunyan, " when I was first awakened, nothing surprised me so much as to see how my fellow-creatures were affected by their temporal troubles : I had enough of these ; but their pressure was nothing to that of my apprehension of the wrath to come : and no indulgence in any thing else could relieve me, until he said unto my soul, ' I am thy salvation.' "

Again, you may, and you ought, to look on your own things as to your *bodily health*. Not that you are to be finical and fanciful ; afraid to put your heads out of doors ; dangling about always with an apothecary at your heels : no, but to maintain a rational care of it, in the use of proper means. For health is a most invaluable blessing : it is the salt that seasons, and the honey that sweetens, every other enjoyment. It is to be valued not only on the ground of enjoyment—for what would affluence be without health ?—but also on the score of usefulness. How many of the duties of life and of religion must be either

imperfectly discharged, or entirely abandoned, if the poor frame be disordered, and we, like Job, be made "to possess months of vanity?" The apostle, therefore, tells us that life is a part of the Christian's treasure: "Life," says he, "is yours." The saints on earth possess one privilege above the saints in heaven: they who are glorified have lost all their opportunities of doing good: they cannot exercise candour towards those who differ from them; they cannot forgive injuries; they cannot relieve the distressed; they cannot instruct the ignorant; and they cannot convert the vicious. "The grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day; the fathers to the children shall make known thy truth." A clergyman, some time ago, in a letter pressed your preacher to publish something against the prevailing crime of suicide: but there are enough excellent things already against gross and immediate self-murder: perhaps something is necessary still to guard persons, and even some professors of religion, against killing themselves, gradually and gently, by lying late in bed, by table indulgences, by the neglect of air and exercise, by harbouring uneasy and malignant passions. For what are all these but "rottenness in the bones?" "And, therefore, though man be mortal," says Dr. Gregory, "I am persuaded not one individual in a hundred dies a death purely natural." "What," says Voltaire, "is a physician? A poor pitiful gentleman, who is always expected and required by his patients to work miracles."

Let us proceed to observe again, that you are not required to be regardless of your *reputation*. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." The man who makes free with his reputation, not only sacrifices his comfort, but his usefulness too. Character is credit; it gives weight to a man's counsel and advice. And, as a professor of religion in particular, never give place to the maxim, "I care not what people say of me." You ought to care what people say of you: your religion is involved in it; the way of truth may be evil spoken of; the worthy name by which you are called may be blasphemed: you may prove a stumbling-block to the weak, and a distress to the strong: you may discourage the hearts, and weaken the hands, of God's ministers. A Christian is like a female, he is not only to maintain purity, but delicacy: like her, so it is with him—to be suspected is almost as bad as to be guilty: and in both of them carelessness is a crime: and therefore, says the Apostle, "Avoid the appearance of evil."

Neither are you required to be careless as to the welfare of your *family*. With regard to this it would be enough to repeat the language of our apostle: "He that provideth not for his own, and specially those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

We, therefore, only remark further, that in your *secular matters* you may look upon your own things. You are, indeed, required to abide with God in your calling; but the God you abide with will never make you unprincipled and imprudent, foolish and neglectful, in your worldly affairs. Never relieve an idler; (by an idler I do not mean those who would work, but cannot; but those who could work, but do not;) but always endeavour to starve them *into* existence, or *out* of it; for they are of no use here: according to the language of the Apostle to the Thessalonians: "When we were with you, this we

commanded you, that if any one would not work, neither should he eat.' "Mind thy business," says Franklin, "and thy business will mind thee." And what says Solomon? "Whoso keepeth the fig-tree shall eat the fruit thereof; so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured. Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks; and look well to thy herds. For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation? The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered: that is, "Make hay while the sun shines." "The lambs are thy clothing and the goats are the price of the field. And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance of thy maidens." "I went," says he, "by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction." (O that others would do so too!)"—"Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." You will observe that the Apostle, in addressing the Romans, calls upon them to be "fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;" and yet, says he, "not slothful in business." Paul would have a tradesman a morning man; he would have him punctual, regular, obliging, active, intelligent. Why should the children of this world be wiser in their generation than the children of light? "If a Christian man," says Mr. Newton, "be a tradesman, I would have him the best in the nation; yea," says he, "if he be but a blacker of shoes, I would have him the best in the whole parish."

To draw towards a close here. You see there is no impropriety in your looking upon your own things: but, says the Apostle, "Look *not* upon your own things." How is this? Why he explains himself—you are not to look upon them *exclusively* or *only*. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man *also*"—"also," this is the interpretation—"but every man also on the things of others." It is much, therefore, like the second commandment—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" or like the Saviour's requisition—"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them; for this is the law and the prophets." Self-preservation, including the promotion of our welfare, as well as the conservation of our being—has been called the *first* law of nature, and it is so: and if man were a solitary creature, it would be the *only* law of his nature. There would be no other for him to care for, but his own dear self. But now man is variously associated and related; and therefore he is made a social being, and consequently is required to be social. Therefore he is told, that "No man liveth to himself:" and only a Cain will question this, and ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Let us therefore notice, WHAT THE ADMONITION ENJOINS—"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

Two inquiries will be here necessary: the first of which is, *How* we are to look upon the things of others. In answer to this we would observe that you are not to look upon them *curiously*, *inquisitively*: that is, needlessly; prying into other people's history, and into their condition and circumstances, fro

mere curiosity, or vanity of mind; or in order to furnish materials for the tongue, which, as the Scriptures say, "walketh through the earth." If this be not absolutely a vice, it is a great vexation, and a great impertinence: and it is found to prevail principally among advanced spinsters, and women who have no families, and men who have no business, and all those who have nothing to do: for, as Dr. Watts observes,

"Satan finds some mischief still,  
For idle hands to do."

And Bishop Watson says, that "our idle days are always Satan's busiest ones." Paul, therefore, says to the Thessalonians: "For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you, neither did we eat any man's bread for nought, but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you." "For we hear that there are some among you who walk disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies." If persons will render themselves obnoxious, if they will draw upon themselves reproach by meddling with the concerns of others, rather than their own, let them bear the consequences; but let it not be supposed that it is religion that makes them thus obnoxious; but the want of it. Let them remember the language of the Apostle Peter: "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busy body in other men's matters."

Again, you are not to look upon them *enviously*. "Be not thou afraid," says David, "when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul; and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish." It is as if he should say, "The distinctions, and the acquisitions, and the cares, which make others so uneasy around you, are not worthy you. What is a man the better for them?" But O what evil is there in the temper itself! It is earthly, sensual, and devilish. Milton describes Satan as looking on the happiness of Adam and Eve in Paradise, and then turning away with a malignant leer. What a wretched, cursed disposition is this, for a man to be uneasy just because another is at ease; to be miserable because another is happy; and to dislike him, just in proportion as by his excellency and success he should love him, and rejoice in him! And yet this principle is so common, so powerful, it is so subtle in its various workings, that Solomon says, "Who can stand before envy?"

You are not to look upon the things of others *unconcernedly*; but so as to feel for them; so as to have an interest in them by sympathy; so as to make them, in a sense, your own; so as that if the subjects of them rejoice, you may "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." Thus it was with Job: "Did not," says he, "I weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?" Thus it was with David: though, you will remember, they of whom he spoke were his bitter enemies, yet says he, "As for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself



as though he had been my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother." Common sense tells us, that this must be the meaning of the Apostle here; for when he says, "Look on the things of others," he cannot mean with such a look as the priest and Levite gave to the poor, wounded, bloody traveller, and then went by on the other side: but he means such a look as that the eye shall affect the heart; such a look as should awaken commiseration, and produce corresponding emotions and exertions. Every thing else will be found vain, and despicable too; mere pretence. As the Apostle James says, "For if a brother or sister be destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

We must, secondly, inquire, *Why* we should thus "look every man also on the things of others." For it is a reasonable service; and we wish you to be able to give a reason of your *practice* always in religion, as well as your *hope*. There are five things to which I must here refer you.

The first of which is, *the authority of God*. I need not, I think, take up any of your time in endeavouring to prove that God has a *right* to command you. A king has no such right to the obedience of his subjects; a master has no such title to the duty of his servants; a father has no such claims to the regards of his children—as God has to all your homage. The reason is this: they have not, and never can have, an absolute property in you; but God has: for God "made you, and not you yourselves." You derive from him your being, your powers, your possessions, all your enjoyments, and all your hopes: you are therefore his by infinite ties, and bound to serve him. And you cannot complain that you do not know what his demands are upon you: he has shewn you what is good; he has told you what he requires of you: he has given you his Word, and in his Word you have his will; and to this you may repair, unawed by every authority in the universe, unless his own, to know what he enjoins upon you. And can you peruse that Book without reading, "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" "And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God, loveth his brother also." You, therefore, know his will, and "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." "The servant which knoweth his Lord's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes."

Secondly, observe, *the need you have of each other*. There is no such thing as independence in our world; it is only ignorance and pride that leads people to affect any thing like it. It is in the social body as it is in the natural body; there are many members, but there is only one body. "Ye," as the Apostle says, "are all members one of another; so that the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." "The very king is fed," says Solomon, "by the labour of the field." And upon how many more does he depend than you! Indeed the higher men rise the more dependent do they become. The rich owe much more to the poor than the poor owe to them; the foundation of the building is the lowest

part, but then it sustains the whole. Were you obliged to make your own bread, to prepare your own food, to dig your own fuel, to make your own apparel, and to attend in every thing upon yourselves, you would soon learn how dependent you are, and how much more others have done for you, than ever you will be able to do for them while you live.

So we turn, thirdly, to *the pleasures of beneficence*. He who leaves his neighbour in hunger and wretchedness, while he is surrounded with the means and opportunities of doing good, is just like a man who dies of thirst with a cup of nectar in his hand. Do you ever feel any thing like ingratitude and discontent? Do you ever begin to murmur and repine? Go and visit immediately the widow, the fatherless, the sick and the afflicted; and then with what feelings will you return! We are aware of an objection here; but it is one of no force. You do not deny that there are pleasures in music: though some leather-eared people can hear even Handel without ecstasy and emotion: and so it is here; the selfish and unkind are not able to enjoy the pleasure of doing good; but they *ought* to be able, and it is their disgrace that they are not: the disposition would increase with the practice; and in the same proportion that you are really benevolent will be your happiness. This is the meaning of our Saviour when he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Some of you do not enter into this, because your benevolence is not real and disinterested. If a benefit be conferred by you in the true spirit of kindness, it will yield a thousand times more blessing to the giver than to the receiver. I wish you would try it. Did you ever give way to a pure, generous emotion, without looking askance, and expecting any kind of remuneration? What were your sensations? What luxury ever equalled that of Job when he said, "When the ear heard me then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." Here is pure pleasure; durable pleasure; pleasure that will bear examination, bear review; pleasure that, like the rose, will yield perfume even after it is dead. Mr. Howard, (and in a sermon upon charity who can help, somewhere or other, referring to that great philanthropist?) presented his wife one day with a purse, with one hundred guineas in it, in order to enable her to take an excursion of pleasure in the summer: "My dear," said she, "what a pretty cottage this would build. How soon the pleasures of a summer excursion will have dropped from the mind, and faded away from the feelings: but to see a little cottage rising, to see a simple, worthy couple entering it; to see the flowers in the front garden, and behind to see a number of chubby boys and girls playing about—O what a perpetuation, what a multiplication of pleasure is here!" I one day read—and I believe the relation is substantially true—of a person who was going to drown himself under an intolerable oppression of melancholy; (and where is the person that does not sometimes feel a weight upon his spirits, a burden that presses his very life down to the ground?) but as he was going, a little girl met him, who piteously implored relief, not only for herself, but her poor starving mother and sisters. What was money to a man in such a condition as he was in? And so he gave her several pieces of silver. She received them with unutterable

surprise and delight, and darted away immediately toward home. He was struck, and though she would follow her; and just as he had arrived at the door of the abode of misery, they were all in tears of ecstasy; and soon they were all kneeling at the feet of their benefactor, as if he had been a god to them. He was much struck with the sight, and said, "Can life, by one single act, produce such pleasure, and shall I throw away the blessing? Lord, forgive my guilty intentions; and may I in future enjoy the happiness of others, if I am to have none of my own." May those tears become yours. Enjoy them for a moment, while I proceed,

Fourthly, to remind you, that *benevolence will not lose its reward*. If a Christian serves God disinterestedly, yet he cannot serve God for nought. I know there are some foolish people, who condemn in a Christian any reference to his own advantages. They are much wiser than God who made them: wiser than their Teacher. How often, in his Word, does God press this as a motive upon us: and is it wrong for us thus to regard it? We should, indeed, consider, that there are motives of a higher and a purer kind, as you will in a moment see: but still these may be proper to a certain distance. He deals with us as with children; and there are motives which will influence them in their infancy, which may be spared as they grow up. You should consider Christians as sanctified only in part, and therefore as liable to temptation. When they are called upon, as they are to be this morning, to give, they will be ready to say, "I cannot afford it; I shall be a loser by it." When this is the case, how appropriate to bring forward such declarations as these: "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days." "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." "The liberal soul deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things he shall stand:" and so on. These are the declarations, the assurances of God, who is faithful, and able to perform what he has promised; for all events are under his control, and all creatures are at his disposal.

I will, therefore, only, fifthly, refer you to *the example of Christ*. And I have reserved this motive for the last, because it is the best. I have preached sermons enough of this kind, not to know, that it is far preferable to address a Christian's *hope* than his *fear*; and to address his *love*, even rather than his hope; and because the Scripture tells us, that "Whatsoever we do, in word or deed, we are to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Our arguments, therefore, and your practice, must be Christian and evangelical; because the Apostle even mentions this motive here; for as soon as ever he had said, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," what does he say by way of enforcement? "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And, therefore, says the Apostle to the Philippians, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." We had no claims upon him; we were unworthy of the least of all his mercies, ill-deserving, hell-deserving creatures, and must have perished for ever.

With pitying eyes ~~the~~ Prince of Grace,  
Beheld our helpless grief.  
He saw, and O, amazing love!  
He ran to our relief."

And what did his interposition cost him? He made peace; but it was by the blood of his cross. He redeemed us from the curse of the law; but it was by being made a curse for us. He obtained eternal redemption for us; but he gave his life a ransom. Therefore if you be selfish, beloved, remember, "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

I must, therefore, hasten towards a conclusion: and I may ask, brethren, upon the ground which I have endeavoured to clear, Is there not cause for reproof? It is remarkable that the Apostle, in speaking of the last days, says, "Perilous times shall come." And in characterizing them he begins by observing, that "Men shall be lovers of their own selves." Where, however, this principle is not avowed, it is found men act upon it: there are enough of these. "Yes," says the Apostle, "All seek their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's." How few men are there to be found who are concerned to obtain the approving sentence which the Saviour pronounced on Mary, "She hath done what she could."

And is there not here a call also for *prayer*? Prayer for what? Prayer for pardon as to *the past*; and "there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared." Prayer for grace as to *the future*; that we may be enabled more to exemplify our principles, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; and that his grace may be sufficient for us.

Surely here is also need, lastly, for *exhortation*. Let me beseech you, my dear hearers, that in future you will "look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Begin with their *spiritual concerns*. O what a thing it is to turn a sinner from the error of his ways; to save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins; to create an ecstasy in heaven! for "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Who would not deem himself infinitely honoured, feel himself infinitely delighted, to be thus employed? But overlook not their *temporal concerns*. Look upon the things which concern their welfare, as well as the things which concern your welfare: be as tender of their reputation as you are of your own. Instead of encouraging scandal, therefore, always crush it; which is very much in your power. Never throw down, and never, as David says, "take up a reproach against your neighbour." There are persons who will not throw down a reproach, but who still are always ready enough to take up a reproach, against their neighbour. Never hear any thing related against an absent fellow-creature, or fellow-professor, without saying to the relater, "But will you allow me to mention *you* as the authority?" This would stop one-half at least of the evil speaking that abounds; for a tale-hearer, is nearly as bad as a tale-bearer.

And so again with their *outward necessities*: remember "whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in that man?" Jesus went about doing good; but he did good to the bodies, as well as to the souls of



men He gave eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, loosed the tongue of the dumb, and fed the hungry. We know that you cannot perform miracles, but you possess means and resources by which you, even you, can feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and provide for the fatherless and the widow. And as water is to be found in every place, if men will but dig long enough and deep enough to find it; so if you wish to be useful, whether living or dying, whatever be your condition in life, you shall be gratified. And the proper method in our day has been adopted too, that is, not to depend entirely, or principally, upon individual exertions, but upon combined and well-arranged efforts.

Here, therefore, let me introduce the case for which I stand here pledged to plead, (O that I may be a successful pleader!) namely, the Alms-houses appertaining to this chapel. They were founded in 1811, under the benevolent exertions of your late worthy and venerable pastor, aided by the liberality of individuals of this congregation, some of whom are now present, but some have fallen asleep. It regards widows; a class of beneficiaries often mentioned, you know, in Scripture with peculiar tenderness. There are now twenty-three safely and comfortably housed in this asylum, in their old age. During the twenty-four years which these Alms-houses have been erected, sixty-one, it seems, of these poor women, of these poor pious creatures, have been removed, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, and blessing God for having put it into the hearts of his servants thus to provide for them. It is to be hoped that, in time, enough of property will be funded for their support; but this is not the case at present. The annual income of the institution is now insufficient to meet its yearly expenses by, at least, one hundred and fifty pounds; a considerable balance is due to the treasurer, and the committee are called upon to make some extensive repairs. They must, therefore, ask your Christian donations and subscriptions. I could enforce this by an appeal to your Christian feelings, as men, as citizens, and as Christians: but your time is gone, and I feel it perfectly needless. I therefore forbear, and I hope you will consider the forbearance your honour, and that we shall find, by the extent of your collection, that I have not been mistaken in my dear old Surrey friends.

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF ULTIMATELY REJECTING CHRIST.

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HON. AND REV. B. W. NOEL, A.M.

ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW, APRIL 5, 1835.

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“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”—JOHN, iii 3 6.

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**MEN** being by nature and by practice obnoxious to the anger of their Maker, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish. Without him they would certainly have perished; but if they are led to believe in him, their doom is reversed.

To receive Christ Jesus, then, is the indispensable condition of the salvation of the sinner. He came that he might, by his sacrifice, bring us into the favour of God; and by his renewing of the Holy Spirit, might prepare us for heavenly glory. These are the two great parts of our Redeemer's work: but as most of you are familiar with the passages of Scripture by which these great truths are sustained, they need not now any further demonstration. To receive Christ, then, is heartily to consent to this his work; to depend on his merit exclusively for our acceptance with God; and to ask for the grace of the Holy Spirit, whom Christ sends forth to bless his people. To refuse this, and, on the contrary, to depend on our own righteousness, on our own moral strength, is to reject the work of Christ, and, by consequence, to reject Christ himself: and the passage before us declares, that whoso does reject him, whoso does “not believe on the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” He must lie under the wrath of God, because originally deserving it. He has rejected the Saviour by whom it may be removed: unable to atone for his own ungodly life, he must, therefore, be exposed to that unchangeable doom. On the other hand, he must lie under the wrath of God, because his nature remains ungodly. It was through Christ alone that the renewal of the Holy Ghost was promised, or became possible: and Christ being rejected, the nature remains unrenewed by the Holy Spirit: and the course of the sinner, still fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, must, therefore, as long as his human life is preserved, be only heaping up fresh guilt before God. Finally, he must lie under the wrath of God, because he has, in rejecting Christ, poured contempt on the unparalleled love of his Maker, rejected God's highest gift: and if “he who despised Moses's law died without mercy under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified a common thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”

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This, then, is the fearful condition of every one who rejects the Saviour. My brethren, are there such among *you*? Some, there may be, who have "a name to live while they are dead:" who are believing themselves on the road to glory, while, alas! they have no good reason to cherish that hope. Some there may be, to whom, if our Redeemer was again to appear as he did to St. John in the Apocalypse, he would address the language which he then employed respecting the church of Laodicea: "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Of all persons, such, especially, need to be undeceived: because so long as that delusion is cherished, every effort to arouse the conscience, and to quicken the slumbering disposition to seek after salvation, is constantly repelled; and every means that might be employed to make such persons feel their responsibility to God is repelled, and blunted, and destroyed by the delusive hope that they are already saved.

There may be others who are conscious that as yet they have never received Christ. They have too much acquaintance with the Word of God to question what is the nature of that reception; they know it well: and they are equally conscious, from a very cursory review of their whole course, that they have never received him: but they go on from day to day, hoping that the time *will* come when some unexpected means employed by divine Providence will bring their languid wishes to a decision, and make them resolve to be the servants of God. It is to this class that I would especially address myself this evening, when entering on one of the most awful subjects which the Word of God could present to our notice: a subject from which, I confess, I shrink, not only because it may offend many of you, but because I feel it most painful to my own mind, when I realize the fact, that, perhaps, in a few years, many of you, my dear hearers, for whom I do sincerely wish well, may enter on all that which I shall now most inadequately describe; may begin, in fact, the endurance of a punishment, the very imagination of which is beyond our power. Yet because it is painful, ought we therefore to disregard it? Why does the Word of God abound in such awful declarations, if they were meant to be passed over in silence? And how can I discharge my duty to you, or how can I hope, unless I would use every instrument which the good providence of God puts into my power, to bring you by every argument, whether of solicitation or remonstrance, to seek that you may be saved in the great day of Christ's appearance? Would it be kind in me to neglect to enforce, or would it be wise in you to omit, the consideration of those truths by which we might be quickened to the necessary efforts after salvation?

My brethren, in every difficulty of life, it is wise to look it in the face; it is always best to examine it in all its bearings; otherwise we never can devise the means by which it may be successfully repelled. If there is any exception it is that in which it is hopeless: then it may be wise to attempt to divert the mind from that which is painful and useless in the consideration. But I thank God this is no hopeless case. Awful it is, but there is a possibility that every one of you may escape that sorrow: and this sermon may be the very means which the God of mercy employs to bring about that blessed result: and notwithstanding hours of pain, and weeks of sorrow, and months of conflict of the mind, (or longer if it please God,) if he should "set your feet on a

rock," and "establish your goings," and give you an interest in Christ, and make you heirs of glory—my brethren, would you not bless the hour when you first listened to the things which pained you? And if you found yourself entering on ages of misery unspeakable, because you had not been warned, would you not curse me at the bar of God?

It is well to look sometimes at what, by the Word of God, we are taught will be the end of them who remain ungodly: and I pray that good God, that Being of boundless mercy, who is waiting to be gracious to your souls now, that this very night not a few of you, who have been undecided and wavering hitherto, may be guided to know and love that very Saviour through whom you may be blessed!

First, then, my dear brethren, if you persist in rejecting Christ, this passage assures us that *the wrath of God must abide upon you*. You will die under the wrath of God: the Almighty God will then be opposed to your happiness: you will then be exposed to the wrath of One, who is infinitely benevolent; whose anger is never capricious, never severe, never unjust, and by so much the more to be feared. You will be exposed to the wrath of One who has treated you with benevolence and mercy all your life; One whom you continually ill-treated, slighted, and opposed; and under whose vengeance you must now suffer. Will Christ then be your Mediator as he would be now? The day of mercy is passed; you stand before God's bar: will Christ be your Mediator then? Alas, my brethren! he has told us, that "on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Christ has become of no effect: you are exposed to the wrath of the Almighty; to the wrath of the gentle, gracious, infinitely condescending Saviour. You are exposed to His wrath, whose love you trifled with all your life long: will he be your Mediator? When the very Saviour who would have plucked you from the abyss of perdition is now your Judge, and you see in Him, who would once have been so willingly your Advocate, nothing but your enemy—what, my brethren, will be wanting then to fill up the cup of your wrath? "Whosoever believeth not the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him."

Consider, secondly, when you are thus under the wrath of God, *what will be the character of the misery involved in that condition*. Under "the wrath of God:" Him from whom came all your blessings. Is not his the sincere benevolence of the universal Father? And if you are under his wrath, think you that you may *then* expect from him blessings to be misused and derided as they have been by you through life? Do you think he will then give you new instruments of opposition? What has our Lord said? "Take, therefore, the talent from him, and give it to him who hath ten talents: for whosoever hath," (that is, hath gained) "to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from whomsoever hath not, shall be taken away even that he hath:" in other words, all the gifts of providence and nature, all the blessings you had on earth, all the opportunities of usefulness which your situation, capacity, and talents gave you; which ought to have been employed to your Maker's glory, but which were employed to your own using, your own private purposes. You lived for yourselves; you lived for earth; you lived for time: and, like the man with the one talent in the parable, you thought your Maker was an austere man; but now you stand



before him as the Judge: the sentence is from Him, that, "from him that hath not, shall be taken away that which he hath;" that is, you must reasonably expect that, in that awful day, you will be destitute of all good. Where is your happiness now? What is that which hinders you from turning to God, and prevents you living a holy life? It is the love of gain, the love of pleasure; you wish to have a little more of this world. But all that on which your hopes are now fixed, from which you now derive your happiness, will then be altogether torn from you: it is all past: "The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof." And what will you attain in its stead? Go to some solitary dwelling, over the threshold of which no friend ever passes; to some poor creature who was once enjoying all the fashionable gaieties of life; but whom successive misfortunes have brought to poverty, and starvation, and sorrow. She has now no companion and no solace in her sorrow. Look at the poor creature musing over the days of past gaiety and pleasure now gone for ever: and see whether there is not a *wreck* of happiness: but a wreck not to be compared with the utter, dismal destitution to which I feel every one is hurrying fast, when, having abused all the mercies of God here, he must go into that world where he can abuse them no longer. My brethren, consider, if this is the case you have to anticipate, what will be the progress of your state of mind when you come to that eternal world!

But this is not all. Alas! we are led to believe, that you will not only be deprived of God, but the language of Scripture is, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha:" "let him be an accursed thing when the Lord cometh." What, my friends, have you to expect? You do not love the Lord, you *will* not love the Lord; you see nothing attractive in him now, and when he comes you must be "Anathema"—under the curse of God. Will not that ensure misery unspeakable? Must it not make you wretched when you feel that he hath cursed you? O brethren, do not venture to provoke the curse of an offended God!

In the next place, if you persist in rejecting Christ till you die, you must expect at death that *the depravity of your nature will be fixed*: for the sentence at that time will be, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." That is, the moral defilement, the utter want of rectitude, which were growing through life, must then be fixed. All the means that were once employed to renew the soul to holiness, have been repelled; now all are removed; and what is there to restore the wretched man to loyalty to God, to obedience to his Maker? You will die: but now you are surrounded by so many of the sunny blessings of life; now, while a gracious Providence has so watched around you, and you have had so many hours of happiness, you feel your hearts so cheerful that you scarcely can be unhappy; the awful buoyancy of your spirits rises above the different ills to which flesh is heir; and you feel surprised at your own happiness. If all this, in a cursed world, does not make you love God, what will you feel when cheerfulness is changed into agony when mercy has merged into judgment; when, at length, you see nothing around you but the threatening anger of your Creator; when there is no offer of mercy, when there is no possibility of escape, when every moment is a moment of torture, when you see before you destitution to all eternity; will that make you love God? Will it? Did you ever hear of one who was taught to

love another by the sufferings which that other, however justly, had inflicted on him? Did you ever hear of one who was thus taught to love God? O, my brethren, be assured of this—that hell is a place of unmixed enmity to the infinitely adorable God. Could suffering bring the soul back to God? Then after these ages of sufferings would not Satan again fix his throne beside that of the archangels in heaven? But witness the ages of fixed and obdurate hatred against God. Witness the unwearied efforts against the cause of Christ which that spirit has been guilty of; and there let the sinner learn what must be his doom if he passes through all the solicitations of divine love unmoved, and confronts the eternal justice of his offended Maker.

Then, my brethren, consider, in the next place, *among what beings you must be placed*: what will be that dreadful society to which, if you persist in rejecting Christ, you must at last be exposed. The Judge shall say to them at his left hand, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Here Satan’s power is checked by various circumstances in the good providence of God—checked by the will and purpose of the Most High: but what will there be to check them *there*? And if you *will* be lost—if you *will* meet the anger of God, and place yourselves among that wretched company, without hope, and without virtue—what is the misery that you must expect? Imagine that any of us should be dragged to-morrow from the home we love, and the friendships we value, to be henceforth incarcerated with the very vilest of the human race. Suppose from this hour, we were to have no other fellowship than theirs—those who, destitute of all virtue, and absolutely incapable of generosity, were sunk in their whole nature in worse than brutal ferocity, sensuality, and vice; to be ever shut up hopelessly in their society. What is worse, imagine that any one of us should be placed under their absolute control. And, worst of all, imagine that that control must be exercised when they were exasperated by penury and want, by shame and fear, and by the consciousness of universal scorn and hatred, by the goading of an irresistible and intolerable misery. What would be our prospects if this were all we could look for, for the rest of this short life? This is a poor faint picture of what must be expected by any amongst us who persists in rejecting Christ. And besides, who will be the companions of the lost soul? Others like itself.

Now, let me ask you, Did you ever weigh with attention those pictures, so humiliating to consider, in which unprincipled men have been placed in juxtaposition in circumstances of extreme misery? Have you ever watched the sufferings of men wandering across the ocean, short of provisions, when the longings of the cannibal have begun to arise in their spirits, and they have looked one on another, with the expectation that the next meal was to be the flesh of man? Did you ever watch in some disastrous retreat, after some ruinous campaign, what the soldiers have done towards each other when unrestrained by the fear of God or the discipline of man? There you may see, when every other feeling was merged in terrific selfishness, something of what you must anticipate will be the condition of those wretched beings who will persist in rejecting Christ to the end—shut up with the devil and his angels.

My brethren, must I say more? Is there more wanting to make you feel that you must flee from the wrath to come? Is there more wanting to make you feel there is no safety for a sinner except in Christ? Then, my brethren,

there is more. If you come to this place of penal suffering, I am persuaded it will immensely augment your woe to think, that *it was all self-sought*; and the remorse which will then penetrate your inmost souls will make despair still more intolerable. Our Lord has spoken of "the worm that never dies," and "the fire that is not quenched?" I am persuaded that that resistless gnawing worm is the intolerable remorse which will ever haunt the miserable mind of the man who might have been among the blessed in heaven, and now feels himself shut up among the damned. "I might have been happy," he says, "but I would not. Accursed folly! that refused to be blessed when my Maker would bless me. Miserable infatuation! utterly unparalleled in this world, that I should barter immortality, and give up my soul!"

Then, brethren, add another feature to this miserable picture. There is every reason to suppose that *that misery will be eternal*. What is to end it? Does not the text say, "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life?" Then how can we hope that we shall emerge from that penal suffering into life? "Shall not see life:" where, then, is the ground of hope? If it was possible for those who are lost to atone for sin, then that suffering might be limited: or, were it possible for them to recover their lost innocence, then we might hope that that suffering might be limited. But both are utterly beyond our hope. Where shall we learn any hope for the condemned sinner? If there might be an expectation that, after some indefinite number of ages spent in torture, the mind might at length escape purified and unsullied, into the presence of God; there would be some miserable alleviation to the expectation. But does Scripture warrant even that hope? "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment." "They that have done good," says the prophet Daniel, "shall rise to everlasting life; some to shame and *everlasting* contempt." "They shall be punished," says St. Paul, "with *everlasting* destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." "The smoke of their torment," says St. John, of one class of transgressors, and, by implication of them all—"The smoke of their torment ascends up *for ever and ever*." Remember, brethren, the argument that would limit them, would limit eternal happiness also: the language affords no stronger terms to express eternity: the very same conclusion that would relieve the lost of their despair, would crush the blessed in their felicity, with the unutterable feeling that they may lose it all.

But if the language of Scripture does not warrant the hope, may it not derive from *reason* some ground of limitation? No: reason apart from Scripture, will bring us to the same conclusion. Who could have meditated with any thing like seriousness, on the attributes of God, even though revelation were wholly set aside, and not see that it is utterly inconceivable that, in the relation in which we stand to our Maker, hemmed in by mercy, besieged by divine light, entreated to return, there shall be any suffering of any duration that can present to God the semblance of an atonement for guilt like ours. If it *were* possible, let me recur to that awful consideration, that the condition of the lost is such, as will more strongly rivet all the chains of sin, will mature their wickedness: the punishment will leave no virtue which destroys hope: with hope farewell fear, and with fear farewell all limitation to depravity. So that if the sins of earth require the punishment of a just and incensed God, the sins of hell must still **more** require it; and every miserable moment of its duration,



will only be still demanding fresh indignation by accumulated wickedness. My brethren, it were a miserable chance for a man to rest his soul upon that, deeming it barely possible that that suffering shall not be eternal, in the face of such plain declarations of God's Word.

There is only one more thought which I will present, to describe the condition of those who shall persist in rejecting Christ. Our Lord gives us reason to expect that it will be *misery altogether overwhelming*. It is termed by St. Paul "everlasting destruction." And our Lord has said, "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder." Remember, he is speaking of the immortal soul. What did he mean by the expression, "It will grind him to powder?" That it would blast, crush the wretched spirit. Could he endure this? Fortitude may wrestle on with adversity; the spirit would not be crushed: could he hope to escape from it, he would not be crushed. But *this* is unutterably hopeless: it is the wrath of *Almighty God*: do you conceive a soul can bear *that*? Our Maker has given us a nature that can wrestle with all the ills of the present state; and the person, however he suffers, escapes from them by dissolution: there is a limit, therefore, to the malice of the persecutor, and the sufferings of the oppressed. The fortitude of man can endure all sufferings; his spirit is stronger than adversity: and even to the last, just as the wolf dies in silence, it is said, and as the camel labours on under the heaviest load, man can bear the severest trials. And yet the arrows of the Almighty even *here* can make him shrink; and that when he may be no coward perhaps on other occasions. The wretched Judas, harassed by the goadings of conscience till he could bear them no longer, may be a picture of what the Almighty can do when, in the language of Job, he "maketh the heart soft"—not with contrition, but with terror; when he pursues it "as a leaf driven to and fro of the whirlwind;" and when he had so much knowledge of God's judgments as to entreat the Almighty to "let loose his hand and destroy him."

How then, brethren, can you endure this, if you will persist in rejecting Christ, when you know that the Almighty God is your eternal enemy, and that you stand without hope, without any shelter, without the possibility of dissolution, when you stand exposed to the avenging justice of God? The venomous reptile that should be crushed beneath some granite cliff that has fallen from the mountain, would not be so utterly crushed as the lost spirit: the poor reptile would escape with its sufferings, but the crushed soul lives on. My brethren, it is a *hopeless* case. Could the tortured spirit merge from its sufferings, at last, glorious and pure in the presence of its God, there were some light in the darkness. But the atmosphere of hell is *despair*: every word, every countenance there is *despair*: look where the ruined man will, he will find nothing but *despair*.

Does the *imagination* shock you? What will be the *reality*? Can you not bear to hear it now *imagined*? O, will your hand be strong, and will your heart endure, that day when you enter the *reality*? Perhaps there are some among you who may have, at this moment, towards him who addresses you in nothing but good-will, something of the feeling of that king of Israel towards the prophet, when he said, "I hate him, for he prophesies no good concerning me, but evil." But if you cannot bear to hear it stated now, with what mind will you reflect upon your Maker himself, if only you should prove all this to be true! I confess I shrink from the task of bringing it before you, because I



would not willingly incur the dislike of the brute animal, much less yours : but I will not, with a mistaken feeling for your happiness, and in disregard to the express will of God, trifle with those truths which may, if God bless them, make you wise unto salvation. He has virtually said to every minister, what he said to Ezekiel—"Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel ; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I shall say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die ; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity ; but his blood will I require at thine hand." Am I pure from your blood ? Have I ventured to excite these most painful emotions in the minds of many ? Have I encountered it that I might bring you to flee from the wrath to come ?

But some of you may say, "This does for the vile, for the profligate, for the worst of our race ; but not for us ; we can only be accused of yielding to the common frailties of our nature : not for us, who only sin with myriads more, who are fulfilling all the social relations of life : not for us, who cast ourselves on the mercy of God, who are sure he will eventually bless and receive us." And is it thus you meet the awful declarations of God's Word ? You say there are numbers more ungodly than you are ; I believe it, brethren : but the very fact that you are associated with numbers, rather, according to the statement of Scripture, marks you out for the anger of God, than exempts you from it. What did the Redeemer say ? "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat : because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Do not be of *the many* : in God's name, be of *the few*. "For *many* are called," said the Redeemer more than once, "but *few* are chosen." Seek to be selected from the multitude. Seek to have the blessing of God amongst those few who tread the narrow, difficult, solitary path to heaven, in the midst of blame, misrepresentation, and ridicule. Dare to join them, and pursue your way to heaven through good report, and through evil report.

But you trust to your frailties : you say you are so frail. I am afraid you are miserable then. You cannot probably have a stronger idea of that frailty than he who speaks to you : but what is that frailty ? It is the frailty of ungodliness and depravity. It consists in an inclination to evil against reason, against light, against example, against every thing that ought to subdue your heart. It is the frailty of a soul that *will* be wicked, and therefore *must* be miserable. Is that your hope ? Banish the miserable anticipation for ever. Cast away all excuses at once ; and seek that you may find a shelter in your Maker's favour.

But you say, you do cast yourselves on his mercy ; that that is your shelter. The mercy of God sent you Christ ; why do you refuse him ? The mercy of God offers you the aids of his Spirit ; why do you reject them ? The mercy of God promises you happiness in holiness ; why do you neglect it ? You are rejecting mercy when the Lord has offered you mercy consistently with all his resplendent attributes. I tell you, brethren, that dying as you are, without any change for the worst—dying as you are, but rejecting Christ—with whatever amiable qualities that rejection may be associated—you never can look on the countenance of Christ with peace, never wake up with the redeemed of Christ in glory : never, never can you be happy.

But you say, the passages to which we have referred, do not mean all that is said. Now, let what I say sink into your souls. You may, if you please, *compel* them to mean less; you may by some ingenuity make them mean something else. But looking at passage after passage, comparing one with another, and all with the known attributes of God, can you *prove* that they mean less? Can you make it *probable* that they mean less? I do entreat you, my dear brethren, never to venture to find out in your experience, what these passages mean. I beseech you in the name of Christ, go not into the eternal world to learn there, in your own miserable experience, what it is to be plunged into the lake of fire; to be sentenced to everlasting destruction; to depart accursed from the Saviour; to be Anathema Maran-atha; to be ground to powder under the vengeance of the Saviour. Whatever the meaning of these passages, they mean that which the common understanding God has given you, and the conscience he has implanted in your spirit, ought not to permit you to misinterpret.

Perhaps there are some who begin to repent of their ungodliness. May those blessed feelings, kindled, perhaps, for the first time in your soul, be increased by the God of mercy to your eternal peace! But you say, you cannot so change all your most favourite habits; you cannot give up the world that is so dear; you cannot expose yourself to ridicule so painful: the moral courage your soul feels this moment, may be gone to-morrow; and though you may be courageous in other matters, you feel cowards here. Did you ever ponder that saying of the Saviour—"What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" What if, by rejecting Christ, you have a little more of present enjoyment; if you can pursue your own wishes a little further; if you can live as you will a little more; if you can secure more of the gains, and more of the objects which dazzle the ambition of ordinary men; if life does seem brighter; still what are you advantaged if you gain *the whole world*, and lose your soul? The loss of the soul, brethren, is a catastrophe which no language can describe. If this planetary world were, by some new force in creation, driven from its orbit, urged forward through space, passing suns and systems, into utter night, and there should be a blank, dead, silent, inert thing, with the corpses of its inhabitants strewed on its surface thick as the leaves in autumn; that miserable spectacle, could it be gazed on, would be but a very feeble description of the lost soul driven out from the beatific presence of God, the sun of our happiness; driven out to dwell among the damned in outer darkness.

But you are willing to become the servants of God, only *not now*. You defer it for a little time; you cannot make up your minds to become at once the resolved servants of God, and receiving Christ Jesus in sincerity and love, to follow his footsteps till the end of your life. You *will* do it, but *not now*. Not now? When will a better moment come? Possibly there are some of you who, at this moment, feel more the necessity of your eternal salvation, than you have done for a length of time; perhaps more than you ever felt: and if you will not resolve now, if you do not turn now, tell me when will a more favourable moment come? I do believe that the lost company which inhabit that bed of misery, have been destroyed by this very resolution, by this very thought—"only not now." They felt the necessity of giving themselves up to God, only not now: and that time never came to them, and may never come to you. If

you pass by this very moment, it is possible that every subsequent time, when attention to the concerns of your soul may be urged upon you, your resolution will be less powerful than it is now. Meantime habits are every day acquired and strengthened ; time is wearing away ; a thousand accidents may deprive you of your pleasures ; or your last sickness may come ; delirium, with the necessary care of the sickening body, may come, and leave you no leisure to prepare for that awful eternity into which you are hurrying.

Do not then, my beloved friends, delay another moment. *Now* is the accepted time ; *now* is the day of salvation. O, if you knew what blessings were in reserve for you, if you did now only change your ease. Give up your backwardness and indecision ; and give yourselves up with all your heart and soul, a reasonable service to your Maker through Christ. O, if you would count the cost, consider what you are, and what you have given up ; you would find that, in making a choice which would secure your happiness for *eternity*, you would not have made a bad choice for *life*. Look around you : do but observe any one who is an honest and habitual servant of God, and see whether there is not a joyousness in him, a superiority to the trials of life, and a blessed anticipation of immortality.

What I would counsel every one, then, is, that you would now earnestly set about your salvation. Set your heart upon being saved. Go to the Word of God to learn every step you must take. Depend exclusively on the merits of the Redeemer for your acceptance with God, and for the supplies of spiritual strength and courage which you need. Seek at the throne of grace for that assistance. Cast yourself at once on the boundless mercy of Jehovah. Never distrust him : you honour him most, when you trust him most. Believe, that though he cannot and will not dishonour himself, he waits to be gracious and delights to save. Bless him that you are not at this time in hell. Never despair, but give yourselves into the hands of that sovereign Lord and Father who will make you eternally happy among his children.

And you, my dear friends, who are parents, remember it is essential to your own welfare, that you should endeavour to be useful to your children. May nothing appear to you, in this world, comparable to their eternal well-being. Bring them to Him who is so ready to hold them in his arms, and protect them from every harm. And then, whenever the summons comes to you, you shall not leave them friendless in the desert world ; for the everlasting arms will be under them ; and they shall meet you in glory.

Christian friends, considering the awful end of those who die unrighteous, let me entreat you that you would look on all around you hurrying into eternity, exposed to the indignation of God ; and to do what lies in you to pluck them from their danger. Never despair of success : never forget that they may be saved with the grace that has saved you. Pity them ; pray for them ; love them, though they may repel your kindness ; and continually solicit at the throne of grace, that you may be successful as instruments to their everlasting glory. If your own crown is secured, you may in heaven look on those who would have been lost souls, but are brought to glory through your instrumentality. This will give greater weight to that welcome, which, I trust, many of you will receive : " Well done good and faithful servant : thou hast been faithful in a few things ; I will make thee ruler over many things · enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

## THE REPEATED INVITATIONS OF THE GOSPEL.

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REV. A. REED, D.D.,

WYCLIFF CHAPEL, MILE-END ROAD, APRIL 12, 1835.

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Then said he to his servants, the wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye, therefore, into the highways, and, as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good : and the wedding was furnished with guests."—MATTHEW, xxii. 8—10.

"So that servant came and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."—LUKE, xiv. 21—23.

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THE greatest act of mercy with which we are acquainted on the part of the Lord is, that he has condescended to present to us the way of our redemption. The declaration and expression of his mercy in reference to this manifestation of his grace is, that he not only reveals our salvation as matter of record and of truth, but that he connects with that revelation of his mercy, a gracious and manifold invitation to come and be with him. The highest and most remarkable proof of his mercy is to be found, not merely in the proposition of mercy to sinners, as such : not merely in the circumstance of its being presented to us by manifold invitations ; but yet more, in the circumstance, that after the invitations have been given, and after they have been perversely refused, they are still repeated, still renewed, and still pressed on our serious attention.

The Scriptures abound, also, in these instances of the divine mercy ; and they are all a paraphrase upon that one declaration, with which God has indulged us, that he has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that he should be converted, and turned from the error of his way, and live ; that his delight is in mercy ; that his delight is in presenting that mercy to us, in its manifold and touching forms ; and in calling up and awakening our attention, if by any means we may enter into the rest which he has prepared for his people.

It is just in this way the portion of the parable on which we are about to observe, comes under our attention. We have seen that God has made an abundant provision for our necessities as sinful and depraved creatures : we have seen that, in doing so, he designs to confer great honour upon his Son as our Saviour. These provisions, as they are abundant, so they are freely exposed to our attention ; and we are freely and repeatedly encouraged to come and to



participate. We have seen that the invitations thus presented to us in God's word and in God's name, and through the ministry of his servants, is frequently rejected. And we have seen that those who continue to trifle and to make light of the message, and to put it away from them in scorn, are at last frequently given up to their own course, to their own worldly will, to their own worldly idolatry; and they are no more addressed, and they are not saved.

We are now to observe, that notwithstanding many refuse this invitation of mercy, and make awfully light of it, that it is still repeated, and it is eventually successful in the salvation of a multitude. It is, therefore, to this renewed invitation that we are to call your attentive and prayerful regard this morning. "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests."

Let us consider, then, in the first place, in reference to this renewed invitation of the divine mercy, the persons who are invited; the encouragement proposed to accept this invitation; and the necessity of the acceptance of it immediately and without delay.

We are to observe, as directed by the course of the parable from the lips of our Lord, in the first place, **THE PERSONS WHO ARE INVITED BY THESE RENEWED INVITATIONS OF OUR LORD.** They are represented as of a different class, as placed under different circumstances, and as giving to the message a different reception. And hence our Lord commands that his servants should go forth, and invite what is denominated by Luke, "the maimed and the halt, the poor and the blind," to come and participate of these rich and gracious privileges. And we are then assured, in connexion with this, that they do not continue to refuse, that they thankfully accept, that they are received on accepting, and that they are encircled with the bounty of their Lord and Saviour.

The Redeemer, certainly, in this parable, has in the first instance respect to the Jews. He regards them as first invited, as in fact they were. Their's were the oracles; their's were the prophecies; and, in the order of things, their's was first the gospel testimony; for it was first presented to their attention. And when those who were pharisaical and proud continued to reject it, the Redeemer still said, "My commission is limited to this people, although it be to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He wandered after those who had wandered: he had compassion upon those who were out of the way: and he endeavoured to continue to win those people to the last to their interests, and their visitation. And the invitation which is thus renewed, and renewed to other persons, is ultimately meant to apply itself to the Gentiles: these are represented as "poor" and "halt," as "lame" and as "blind," and as those in the highways, in the streets and lanes; they were not in circumstances like those of Israel, not privileged like the people of Israel were; far from the covenant of peace, they were ignorant of the way of salvation. And, if it had been propounded that mercy was to come to any, it would have been said at once that that mercy was not to visit the Gentiles, as they then lay wrapped in ignorance, in darkness, and in idolatry.

Now, our Lord here intimates, that, by renewed invitations, what the unbelieving Jew rejected, the Gentile shall be disposed to receive. He shall gather into himself a family, a vast family, and make them all participants of the grace of life.

The subject accommodates itself to our present circumstances, and to our profitable meditation. The persons who are thus addressed, are those who are out of the way; those who are ignorant; those who are helpless; and those who feel themselves unworthy. These were not the persons addressed by the first invitation: but these are the persons now comprehended in the larger invitation of divine grace. Those who were worthy, we have explained, as being such persons as by their profession, by their privileges, and by their education, might seem most favourable to the Gospel when it should come, and most disposed to accept it. It was, therefore, in the first instance, presented to them; but they rejected it: and our Lord says, by this rejection they were not worthy: that is, the message was not treated worthily; the message was not honoured; they did not bow to the authority which sanctioned it; they did not see the necessity of the provision made by it; they were not grateful for the provision made for them; but they passed by, with scorn and contempt, all that God had done for their benefit. They were in this sense not worthy: and they were therefore separated from the hope of their calling, and were appointed unto suffering and punishment.

Those who are now addressed are described as of a different class: and the description, as in the former case, certainly bears on the circumstances of the party, and also upon their disposition.

In the first place it affects *their circumstances*. They are those who are blind, and poor, and out of the way, and unworthy—feeling themselves unworthy. These persons are now invited to come, and freely to participate. That is, the individuals who are thus addressed are persons who are ready to conclude, that the invitation, perhaps, does not comprehend them, because they have not professed religion as others; because they have not walked in the outward invitations as others; because they have not been indulged with pious, early education, as others; because they have not felt something of “the power of the world to come,” as others: therefore they are disposed to think the invitation of mercy does not extend to them. But this invitation not only includes them, but is expressly addressed to them. These persons, who had not a previous profession of religion; who had not been baptized, perhaps, into its name; who have acknowledged no obligation in former life to the truth; nevertheless these persons, thus out of the way, thus not having professed Christ, and having very little knowledge of him, are notwithstanding invited to come, and freely to partake of the divine, fatherly bounty.

It addresses itself, therefore, to such of this congregation as may have felt themselves in these circumstances. Perhaps, under the former invitation, there may be some of you who may be disposed to entertain these difficulties and this objection. The invitation has been presented with earnestness and fervour to the conscience. Many have rejoiced: some have submitted to it and received it: possibly you have not, to the present hour, acknowledged its authority, and yielded to its invitation. The subject addresses itself now to *you*; and it proposes to master, and to set aside, all the difficulties and objections, which

you have perhaps made an excuse to its acceptance. You have thought your early education has not qualified you to understand religion: that as your parental instruction has not brought you early under the means of grace, you are not in a state of readiness to accept the invitation. You have thought that, as you have made no profession of religion, you are under no constraint to do so; and may still remain at liberty to take time to consider of this, the message from on high. You have thought you wanted understanding for the subject. You felt doubts on the subject, and questions which you have on some nice points of Christian doctrine—of election, of calling, of the way of peace and reconciliation: you felt that you would rather wait, and put aside, although respectfully put aside, the invitation, until these difficulties are overcome, and you have an invitation expressly accommodated to your circumstances, and your professed state of want of outward privilege.

If there is such a class of persons in this congregation, (as I believe there may be) the invitation is understood to come expressly to *you*. You have not had early privileges; you have not yielded yourselves to the suggestions of religion; you have not taken upon yourself the name of Christ; you have not bowed with the people of God, in the regular profession of his name and his worship. Then it is to *you*, who are here described as out of the way, as comparatively poor and ignorant, as altogether destitute and unworthy, and such in your own conception also—it is to *you* that the word of this salvation is come.

But as it describes circumstances, so it is evidently meant to describe *dispositions*. Our Lord represents to you the disposition of those who rejected and made light of his invitation. He shews that their pride of heart, that their prevailing worldliness, that their covetousness of the things of this life, have altogether prevailed against their acceptance, or even their just consideration, of his invitations. When the invitation was addressed to them, they said to themselves and to each other, “I must go and cultivate my farm;” “I must go and prove my oxen;” “I must enjoy my domestic comforts:” “I must pursue this world’s good.” The reigning disposition of the mind was earthly, was of this world, was bowed down to time, and to sense, and to flesh: and on this account they made light of a message which had a spiritual and eternal influence.

On the other hand, our Lord means to describe not only circumstances, but dispositions, in the account which he gives of the persons accepted. They are, he says, such as were out of the way; such as were poor, and blind, and halt, and maimed. It is such as deemed themselves to be in this state, and by finding themselves in this state, found themselves unworthy, and excluded from the common invitation. They are now addressed; they are represented as specially embraced; and the dispositions of mind bestowed on them, are the very dispositions that are meant to harmonize with the invitation that is given. They are poor, they are ignorant; they are sensible of their poverty, they are sensible of their ignorance of God, of the way of salvation, of the way in which a sinner can be justified before him. They have written things against themselves; they have put themselves beyond the pale of profession; they have deemed themselves unworthy of the common privileges of the people of God. And they have made these, perhaps, too ready excuses for past neglect of the authority of the Gospel.

But now these persons are to be understood to be particularly addressed. Because you are sensible of inward poverty, because you are sensible of inward darkness, because many things in religion seem to perplex your understanding, and you cannot relieve them, because you have many doubts and scruples whether you can come; and because you have an habitual prevailing sense of your own unworthiness, and this has been made an excuse to your conscience from time to time—the invitation is accommodated to you. You are poor, and therefore you are to come; you are blind and dark, and therefore you are to come: you are unworthy; you have a sense of unworthiness recorded in your own spirit; and your very unworthiness is a reason for you to come, is a justification to come. You are therefore addressed in this capacity, that you may be inclined to come.

Those that had the first invitation were not worthy; those who are now addressed are deeming themselves not worthy, and, therefore, are, perhaps, indisposed to come. But we are to consider, that because they have this deep, and prevailing, and growing sense of unworthiness, therefore they are embraced by the invitation; that God accommodates especial encouragement to their state of mind, and that he means to make their very sense of unworthiness, an evidence of invitation, and the reason of approach and of confidence.

You are not, therefore, to wait until you qualify yourselves to make the invitation your own: you are not to wait until this poverty is resolved into imagined riches; you are not to wait until the blindness and darkness is resolved into clear light to distinguish all Scriptural truth: you are not to wait till the sense of worthiness comes over you: but you are to come just as you are; and because you are so poor, so blind, so destitute, and must perish if you remain from the Saviour—on this very account you are invited and entreated to come.

Unworthiness, then, let it be observed, has no reference to merit, or to the inward state of feeling: but it has reference to that state of mind by which we treat the invitation which is bestowed. If an individual receiving such an invitation of grace, shall treat it lightly, shall scorn it, shall put it away, he shall deem himself not embraced in it, or not interested in it, and he is therefore not worthy to partake of its bounty. But if an individual shall deem himself most unworthy, and yet, with all this sense of unworthiness in him, shall be inclined to treat the message worthily—that is, to receive it, if he could but know it was for *him*, if he could but know it invited *him*, if he could but know it embraced *him*, if he could but knew it proposed *his* salvation, and *his* happiness—if the individual is thus disposed to treat the message worthily, then, whatever may be his sense of unworthiness, it is a message to him, and a message which he is bound to obey at the call of Christ his Saviour.

It is to be remarked, also here, to strengthen the whole representation, that only such as have this prevailing disposition of mind do actually comply with the invitation: those who had a different state of mind, whatever may be the shades of difference, did not comply. They had a variety of reasons, and they were worshipping a variety of idols, and they were living in a variety of forms: but all of them gave the preference to the world and this life, over eternity and the things of God. They did not obey it: the message came to them; they were bid; they were bidden many times, and with much love and grace in every invitation; and yet they did not accept it.



But here the message came to another class of persons, in a different state of mind; and in that state of mind it is represented as accepted. They are poor, they are blind, they want the very provisions which are proposed. They are disposed to listen to the voice which graciously and tenderly addresses them: they see the adaptation of the mercy revealed to their own circumstances. They have a sense, indeed, of unworthiness and doubt come over them; and they fear on this account they may not come. But when once the voice of invitation falls distinctly on their ear, when once their own character and state are described in that invitation, and when once they are assured they may come, they come instantly, they do honour to the invitation, and they are, in every case, accepted by the Lord of the feast.

This disposition is represented as in every case associated with *the act of compliance*: there will be no compliance without. While pride remains in the heart, while the world reigns over the affections, while the things of time and sense controul our preference and our judgment, it is in vain these invitations are addressed to us: we make light of them, we pass them by, and we scorn them. It is requisite, in order to estimate a righteousness not our own, that we should be stripped of our own: it is requisite to effect a deliverance from sin, that we should taste the bitterness and the gall attached to the practice of sin: and it is necessary, in order to estimate the provisions of divine grace, that we should know how destitute we are in our own circumstances, and how life and happiness are bound up in the hands of God. Then shall we come, then shall we joyfully come; then will all excuses as readily vanish as they were invented; and then shall we give thanks continually to Him, who has made us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

In the second place, there is **ENCOURAGEMENT TO ACCEPT THIS INVITATION**. The persons who are thus addressed, are persons who from their very circumstances might feel discouraged.

On this account, it is meant to overcome their discouragement, in the first place, by embodying their very character and their very fears in the substance of the invitation. For instance: if a prince should give a general invitation to the nobles and to the people at large, you might feel that the invitation did not comprehend *you*. You might be ready to say, "My circumstances are so poor, I am so unknown to the sovereign and court; I have so little pretensions to meet others there, my superiors in life, that I cannot imagine the invitation, after all, is meant for *me*." You would be discouraged; and under this discouragement you would stay away. You would hear others listen to the invitation, and comply; and yet *you* would not comply; because you would think that your circumstances would exclude you, although the king might not exclude you. But when the invitation should come, and that invitation should embrace your particular state, that you might have this discouragement put away, that you might be constrained to come, you would instantly comply.

Now this is precisely the position in which infinite mercy places you. You have had your discouragements: you have not had previous privileges; you have much darkness on your mind; you have many difficulties on Scriptural subjects; and many impediments have laid in your way to yielding your hearts to Christ. And the world especially has taken advantage of all these dif-

faculties, and held you in bondage till now. Now here is an invitation in which your name is written, in which your very discouragements are put down, and which are made an encouragement and a motive to come to Christ, and to put your trust in God.

Still the encouragement advances upon us as the parable opens. Our Lord invites those who are thus discouraged to come: and we are assured by Luke in his testimony that they do come, and that the house is filled with the guests, and that there is yet abundant room for the supplies of divine mercy, and for the justification of that mercy to sinful man. All these particulars connected, supply large encouragement to those who are most discouraged.

Observe, in the first place, that *the designs of God's mercy shall be realized*. His house shall be filled: there may yet be room; the invitation may be refused, and slighted, and neglected by many; and many scorers may scorn it to their own destruction: but, nevertheless, God's covenant shall stand; God's love shall not be frustrated; the designs of his richest mercy shall be accomplished. Some may reject in scorn, but others shall receive in gratitude, and at last his house shall be filled; and the number of his redeemed which no man can number for multitudes shall have been brought into his family, shall have been seated at his table, shall have partaken of his bounty, and shall even sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb in heaven, for ever and ever.

His purposes of mercy and grace, therefore, shall stand. Many have actually complied with the invitation which is thus given. It is given to the poor, to the blind, to the halt, to the destitute, and to those who in the first instance thought themselves unworthy to come. But, nevertheless, multitudes *have* complied; they have cast themselves upon the truth of the invitation, upon the grace of the person who gives the message, and finding this truth and this grace, they have found it never to fail; they have gone and claimed a place in God's house, a name with God's children, and cast their hopes on heaven; and they have never been disappointed in doing so. Multitudes have come, and of this very class and description have they come; for this is only the description which will ultimately realize the grace of salvation. And they have all been received; there is no record of an individual thus coming being rejected: "*All who come unto me shall be received; I will in no wise cast them out.*" Can he invite the poor, and yet reject the poor? Can he invite the maimed, and yet reject the maimed? Can he invite the blind, and yet reject the blind? Can he invite, by express message, the unworthy, and yet reject you on the account of that unworthiness? This is impossible.

Then the encouragement goes as to the fact that *multitudes have entered, and have been received*. This is the encouragement, and the reason, why you also should accept the invitation; and why you should haste to partake of it. Multitudes have received, and have partaken of all the blessings consequent on it. God's purposes of grace have been accomplished in every age; they are accomplishing under this dispensation in a larger measure than at any former time; and at the present time there is reason to say, that many are listening to the invitation, and many are bowing to its authority, and many are blessed in its mercy. Many have entered, and many have partaken.

Might not this argument be pressed even closer? Might it not be said of ourselves, as a congregation, that many have been thus addressed from time to

time; and that many graciously constrained, have esteemed the invitation; have cast themselves on the authority of God, and have received, and do possess this great salvation? Is this true? Is it not an encouragement, a motive, an inducement to you also to strive to enter in at the strait gate, and to partake of the ineffable mercy? Has your parent entered, and will not *you* enter? Has your wife entered, and will not *you* enter? Has your child entered, and will not *you* enter? Is there not reason in these circumstances? While many are pressing into the kingdom, while many are repenting of sin, and while many are professing his name—is there not reason, brethren, why *you* should earnestly and instantly seek also your personal salvation? O there are many under convictions of sin, and *you* are not convinced; and many whose scruples and difficulties have been overcome, and *your's* have not been overcome; and many in the high-ways, and streets, and lanes, who never had your privileges, and do not now possess your knowledge, who have actually decided for Christ and entered into his kingdom and blessing.

*“And there is yet room.”* This is also made an additional encouragement by Christ. You might otherwise have said, “O, so many have entered, and so many come, and so many participate, that the company is made up, the number is complete, and there is no room for more. Thus, in the first instance, you might stay away under false scruples, until the place seemed to be occupied; and then stay away, because there was no place to be found for you. But *“yet there is room.”* Many have come; many are coming; but *“yet there is room”* for *you*. O! if you stay away, God is resolved that you shall be left without excuse. There is yet room; room in the immensity of his designs of grace; room in the immensity of the might, and mercy, and merit of Christ, our Saviour; and room, immense room, in that heavenly world of light, in which we are all to be connected together in Christ Jesus, and to be at last presented to the Father. There is yet room. Through every age multitudes have come, and multitudes are still coming; yet there is room: room in the church for you; room at the table for you; room to all the privileges of the Gospel, and the gratifications of the saints, for you. *“And yet there is room.”* Your children have come, and you have not come; but there is yet room for you: your parents have come, and you have not come; and yet there is room for you: those with less privilege, and less knowledge, and less understanding, have come, and you have dared to stay away: and yet there is room for you. The door is not yet shut; mercy is not yet expended; truth does not yet become silent; but the invitations are here; mercy is abundant; and you are invited still to come, for *“yet there is room.”*

We glance at the remaining part of the subject, which is, that THIS INVITATION, IF ACCEPTED, SHOULD BE ACCEPTED IMMEDIATELY, AND WITHOUT DELAY. There are several expressions supporting this representation. Our Lord sends forth his servants in haste: some have been rejected: he sends them forth in haste, commissioned with all his authority to tell others to come. The poor, the blind, the ignorant, those who are sensible of their unworthiness, are to come instantly, that his house may be filled. He renews the invitation, and says not only *“Invite them,”* but *“Compel them to come.”* Surround them with such arguments, fill them with such persuasion, touch them with such

motives. Speak in my name; speak, if possible, as men could not speak: and thus bear witness to their consciences, and "compel them to come in."

All this is designed to shew, that *the compliance should be immediate, and without delay*. It should be so from the painful example already presented before us. The invitation had been made sincerely; given graciously; given, and repeated with much inducement; and yet those who were bidden did not come. They made light of it; and He who had invited them at last made light of them; passed them by; consigned them to weeping, to darkness, and to despair. Here, then, is the example, the fearful example, on the one hand, of persisting in slighting his name. They did *but* slight it: many of them might have reasoned as you possibly have reasoned: they *meant* to do it; they *meant* to comply with it at a convenient season; after they had tried their oxen, after they had visited their farm, after they had enjoyed domestic delights. They meant, possibly, at a *future* time, to do all possible honour to this invitation; but the present time was *not* the suitable time. They made light of it; and God passed them by, and the invitation is no more given. This is an inducement to *you* to yield an immediate compliance with the invitation. Where there is much mercy there is much judgment: the mercy which melts one, is followed by the judgment which condemns another; and the greater the mercy neglected and rejected, the greater and the more immediate may they expect to be the displays of his indignation and his wrath.

O then, by the very instance of his righteousness and his judgments, you are constrained immediately to comply. Do not make light of it; do not despise it; do not pass it by, and promise it attention and thought another day: for others have done so, and others have been ruined in doing so.

This is the chief concern of life; and therefore it should be complied with instantly and without delay. We deem it wise and necessary to attend to business according to its call, and according to its importance: and the business which we regard of first-rate importance, is the business which we attend to first, whatever other things we may put away. But here is an occupation, and an avocation, and a concern, of infinite moment to each of us. He who does not deem it the first concern of life, has not entertained any just conceptions of his own convictions, or the authority of God, or the religion he professes to acknowledge. It is the chief consideration; and therefore if it is to be attended to, it is to be attended to immediately and without delay. It is not to be put aside until you have made your wealth, until you have discharged your merchandize, until you have regulated your accounts, until you have established your household, until you have got rid of the present burden of care, or the present pursuits of ambition which are occupying your attention. God will not suffer it to be put by for *these*; but these are to be put by for *it*. The world is to wait; domestic comfort is to wait; the world's occupations and pursuits are to wait; all the endearments of life are to wait, and the claims of life to wait. rather than this is to wait: you must give your first and chief attention to your soul's salvation, and the claims of Christ upon your conscience.

It demands immediate attention, without delay, because *all things are waiting for our good*. Our Lord himself has offered an exposition on this subject, and we have had reason to attend to it. It is but an argument for an immediate attention, against all delay, and all scruple and difficulty. All things are



waiting for you. *God* is waiting to receive you ; *Jesus* is waiting to accept and to bless you ; *the provision* is already prepared, waiting to gratify you. The *minister* is waiting to see the proof of his invitations and his labours, and his prayer. And *angels* from heaven, ministering spirits to the church of God, are waiting to see whether you shall accept and honour, or whether you shall neglect and dishonour, the message, the invitation from heaven

It should be received and accepted at the present time and immediately, because *the present time is the day of salvation*. It is what God himself condescends to pronounce "the acceptable time:" that is, in other words, the time in which he is pledged to accept you. He is not pledged for other times, but he is pledged for the present time. For instance : in relation to this invitation you are described. You are poor and destitute, and need the very blessings proposed. And you are unworthy, and you would be discouraged by a sense of your unworthiness ; and the invitation comprehends you. It describes you that you may have no discouragement in coming. The invitation is presented to you by his ministers ; and his ministers are authorized to say, in his name, that if you yield yourselves to that invitation, God is true to receive you, and bountiful to bless you. Then understand, it is for your attention at the present time, and not for the future. There is no invitation that you shall be received *to-morrow* : there is no promise that is to be realized as to to-morrow, while you are delaying and negligent. And, therefore, scorning the invitation, there is no encouragement for you as to the future. *Now* is the acceptable time ; it is the time to which the promise applies ; it is the time when the invitation is given ; *now* is the acceptable time. If you embrace this *now* ; if grace inclines you to come *now*, then grace is pledged to receive you, and to crown you with its blessings. *Now* is the acceptable time ; but there is no promise that if you neglect it now, and promise compliance to-morrow, that authorizes you to expect it. *O to-day* is the day of salvation. How many have ruined themselves by to-morrow's hopes, by to-morrow's prospects, and by resolutions made for the morrow, and not made for the present time ! *Now* is the accepted time : if you are disposed graciously to come now, you shall be received, you shall participate in all this goodness ; you shall be made heirs of life everlasting.

Then it is an invitation to be accepted instantly, because *life is short and uncertain*. How uncertain you can witness by what has taken place in your families, in this congregation and church. How uncertain, you can witness by what you observe in life and in the world. The world is full of care, affliction, mortality, and bereavement. Life, therefore, is to you uncertain ; and it is irrational, it is sinful, it is most unwise, to put away the invitation which involves all your peace, and all your safety for the life to come, as well as for the life that now is. We cannot tell, my beloved hearers, but this may be the very last time you may have the opportunity of hearing the Gospel ; this may be the last time in which you may be freely invited to come and partake of all the riches of your salvation. Life is so uncertain ; so many are dying, dying suddenly, dying away from the midst of their privileges—some from the midst of privileges they have never valued, that it is the height of folly, as well as the height of crime, to reject or to neglect this invitation.

Then *the day of grace* is often shorter than the *day of life*. It was so with

Jerusalem. "O Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens, but ye would not. O Jerusalem, that thou hadst known the day, even this the day of thy visitation! but now it is hid from thine eyes." I verily believe, and the statement of our Lord bears us out entirely in the belief, that there are many instances in which the day of grace is shorter than the short day of a man's life; in which the invitation has been given, has been repeated, has been repeated and again repeated; and in which the invited, at last, under such resistance, has been given up to worship his own idols, to pursue his own course, and to find his own destruction. I beseech you, therefore, look to your salvation; and be not as Esau, that profane person, who preferred the world to God's blessing, and who thus preferring the world to God's blessing, sought a place of repentance with tears, but never found it.

In this service, then, and by this address, the invitation of grace is presented to this congregation. It is so presented as to include all our states, all our circumstances, all our doubts, and scruples, and fears, if we are the subjects of such things. One thing is quite certain on the present occasion, on the presentation of the invitation, the message from heaven. All of you who are capable of thinking and attending to the subject must come to one resolution; it is either the resolution to accept it, or the resolution to reject it.

I have now simply, as the minister of Christ, as responsible for all that is thus said at the last great day, and under a living conviction that I must meet you at that last great fearful day—I have now to ask, since every person in this place, attending to the subject at all, must have a resolution and a decision of mind; I have to ask, What is your secret purpose of mind on this subject? Is this invitation accepted, or is it rejected? There is no medium course. You cannot place it aside; you cannot promise it future attention; you cannot hide it on a coming day. Your mind is exactly before God in this position at this instant—it is either accepting or rejecting this invitation. If not accepted in deep penitence of spirit, in faith in God's word, and in hope of his salvation, then, whatever may be the pretence, whatever may be the plea, your spirit is inwardly rejecting the invitation of divine mercy. I beseech you not to deceive yourselves. Carry this conclusion home to your closets, to implore the grace which can overcome every difficulty, and enable you to yield yourselves joyfully, and for ever, body, soul, and spirit, to Christ as your Redeemer. Amen.

## THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST CONSIDERED IN CONNEXION WITH HIS CHARACTER.

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REV. S. ROBINS, A.M.

CHRIST CHAPEL, NORTH BANK, REGENT'S PARK, GOOD FRIDAY, 1835.

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“ For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”—1 PETER, iii. 18.

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WE are, for the most part, familiar enough with the leading topics of Gospel truth, and with the main facts of the Gospel history ; those which serve, as it were, for landmarks in the great field of Christian theology. But our especial danger is this—that we are so occupied and so engrossed by the things of earth and of time, which though small in their dimensions, yet being near at hand, serve to hide from us the far more gigantic and stupendous interests of our everlasting state.

And yet those things to which we are so insensible, have fastened to themselves the regardfulness of all the intelligent universe. We believe that the great achievement of redeeming, and restoring the world, is a matter whereon angel and archangel have, from the earliest development of God's design, been continually fixing their regard. And hence it was, that when the Saviour bent the steps of his mysterious journey towards the confines of our dim and far-off world, the angels were ready with their song ; and when one sinner is converted, and one soul gathered into the kingdom of Jesus, the angels rejoice over such an one. And we cannot but believe, that when the Saviour hung upon the cross—that when he cried with his dying breath, “ It is finished,” the angels, who had been so regardful in observing all the progress and the development of God's gracious design, then hanging over the marvels of Christ's dying hour, would rejoice, because therein was the accomplishment of all which God had proposed for their contemplation ; then was fulfilled the overturning of the kingdom of darkness. And when the Saviour died, there would go forth trembling and dismay amongst the spirits that had been banded and leagued against God : and there would be raised among the celestial company, anthems of such bursting praise, as never before had been heard, even in the courts of heaven itself.

But it was not only the intelligence of the universe that was thus fixed on the death of the Saviour, and the triumph thus gained for Jehovah ; but even mute and inanimate nature sympathized with its dying Lord, and the rent rocks, and the open graves, bore testimony that it was no common death which the earth was thus witnessing. Now, all these things will cast a shame on the

insensibility of mankind—so closely, so far more than all others interested in this great matter—if they shall continue regardless, and cold, and insensible, and absorbed by the things of earth and time, while all beside themselves are interested in the matter before them.

We think, then, it is a very profitable ordinance, that we are called together from the midst of our week-day work, from the midst of the secularities of life, from the midst of the absorbing engagements, the clinging, cleaving interests of the world; and that we are now, by the direction of our Church, assembled together in the sanctuary of the Lord, to consider the most august and the most magnificent thing which can be brought before human contemplation. And truly does it open to us a very wide field of consideration. We might endeavour to bring before you how all the prophecies were fulfilled which especially related to the great events of this day. We might shew you how the Lamb, the appointed Paschal Lamb, of which not a bone was to be broken—how the morning and the evening sacrifice—how the blood sprinkled on the doors—how the scape-goat, over which the sins of the people were imprecated, and which was then driven into the wilderness—were all telling of what was to come to pass when Jesus died. We might shew you not only how these daily and standing prophecies amongst the Jews had their fulfilment—the palpable, and the visible, and the evident prophecy and type; but we might shew moreover, how the written records and predictions had their exact and their most precise fulfilment, when Christ was betrayed by his own familiar friend; when he was sold for a specific price, and that price employed in a predicted use; how his garments were rent, how they were parted among the soldiery, and how for some of them a lot was cast; how his side was pierced, and the gall, ere he died, was given him to drink. And we might shew you how strong the evidence of this is from prophecy; shewing you, at the same time, that the persons who were most interested in denying the fulfilment, were the very persons to whom the custody of these written records were committed.

But our text seems to open to us another line of contemplation; and we throw out these suggestions because they may serve as a profitable subject, whereon, during the remainder of the day, you may fasten your minds. Taking this present verse as the subject of our consideration, we rather propose, first, to speak to you of the amount of suffering in connexion with the character of the divine Saviour; and in the next place, the cause of the endurance to which the Saviour was called.

As to the first head of our subject, **THE AMOUNT OF SUFFERING IN CONNEXION WITH THE CHARACTER OF THE DIVINE SAVIOUR.** It is said, that he was “the just one;” that he suffered “the just for the unjust.” Now, concerning human righteousness, it is spoken of in the Bible only in two ways: either by way of comparison—so that one who lives under the fear of God, and under the influence of his Holy Spirit, leading a life of comparative obedience and duty, stands out, as it were, from the dark back-ground of the low morality and the evil practices of the world wherein he mingles; so that in contrast with them he shall be called a “righteous one;” and yet, if he be brought to another measure, and if he be tried by another standard, if the balance of the



sanctuary be applied to his doings, there shall be found such an utter deficiency in all the apparent excellences of his moral character, and such a mingling of sin, even in his holiest and most righteous doings, that we cannot positively pronounce (though we can comparatively do so) of such an one that he is righteous. For the righteousness of man may be spoken of in the Book of God as his own, whereas it is *imputed* to him; it is, as it were, *delivered* to be his: complete in the *Saviour*, it is attributed to *the saved one*.

But you will see how the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, the complete and stainless holiness of his character, is something altogether separate from this: it is not a thing of comparison, but a thing of positive essence: it is not a thing imputed from another, but it is a thing which he eternally and inalienably possessed himself. Now we can conceive no point more important to be kept continually in mind—especially as there are such erroneous and heretical opinions abroad on this head; we think there is no point that we can hold more firmly than this—that the Saviour was as pure in his human nature from sin, as in his divine nature. Now it has not been asserted by any, even the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ, that actual sin might be imputed to him. Even the infidel, who denies the divine mission of Jesus, who denies that he came from heaven on an embassy from heaven's King—will yet marvel at the self-denying beauty of his moral character: and he will tell us that the Gospel, though it is not inspired, though it tells us nothing of the counsels of God, is yet a most precious book, because it opens such, in the way of precept and example, as the world had never before seen. It is not, therefore, of *actual* sin, but it is of *original* sin, that we must speak.

Now we cannot assert how original sin can possibly be imputed to the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, any more than actual sin; because the very entailment was cut off, and the succession was interrupted. He lived not in the line of the first Adam; he was included not in the covenant of our first father: and therefore he did not inherit that stained, and polluted, and defiled nature, which has belonged to all his progeny. If it were not on this account, we can see no reason why there must have been a miraculous conception; we see no reason why the Lord Jesus Christ should not have been born into the world by the very parentage by which others are produced. But it was for this very purpose—that the line of succession might be interrupted, and that the entail might be cut off, and that the inheritance might come to him in a nature as pure and sinless, as that wherein the first Adam stood before his Maker on the morning of his creation; that morning when he walked unstained and unspoiled in Eden, and held communion with his God, conversing with him even as a man would converse with his friend.

Now, we think that it is indeed a most touching thing, that He, who alone on the broad platform of this globe, was unchargeable with sin, was the one on whom all the burden of transgression was to be bound; that He who in his own character was altogether blameless, against whom his enemies could bring no sinful charge, of whom it was pronounced by the judge who condemned him that there was “no fault in him,” and by the rude soldiers who stood by his cross to guard his execution, that he was “truly the Son of God;” we think it

is indeed a most affecting thing, that on Him, thus the pure and innocent, was laid the burden of all conceivable transgression.

But in opening to you this head of the subject, we desire to shew, not only that Jesus, the just, suffered for the unjust, but that the very righteousness of his character enormously enhanced the amount of his sufferings.

Now, the very purity, and innocence, and blamelessness of the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, caused that there should be a strange incongruity between the nature that he bore, and the region that he inhabited. All was strange and all was alien; so that whatever he looked upon, and whatsoever he heard, was revolting, and loathsome, and hateful to him. We may conceive this, though it may be in some very small degree. If a man in whose heart the work of sanctification had made the greatest progress, a man who had grown up in the knowledge and in the practice of divine things, a man who should stand forth from the society by which he was encompassed, and whose life should be a daily and prevailing censure on evil practices; if we can conceive of such an one, condemned to the companionship of the most unholy, constrained to have daily and hourly intercourse with the infidel and the blasphemer, who should pour forth from the evil heart words of corruption and defilement; we should readily conceive, that on such an one would be laid a far more dreadful infliction than human malice could otherwise devise: and if such a man were locked up in the dungeon cell, with evil companions such as we have described, death would be a light infliction: all the agony and all the torture that could be laid on the suffering frame-work of flesh, would be light and insignificant compared with the laceration and agony of his spirit. And yet even this does not represent to us the sufferings that came to the pure and holy spirit of Jesus; just in consequence of this contrast between his own righteous nature, and the unrighteous wherewith he was surrounded: because in ourselves, even when we have made the utmost advancement, even when we have gone the farthest forward in the attainments of the Christian character, there remains so much of the old nature, so much of unconquered and unexpelled sin, that we are not so keenly alive as we should otherwise be to the dreadful torment of such intercourse with sin.

Moreover, this purity in the nature of the Lord Jesus which we assert altogether as much in respect of his freedom from original as from actual sin, made him the especial object of unceasing and most malignant attack to Satan. The prince of this world came but he had nothing in Jesus: of the heart of the pure and the holy Jesus it might alone be affirmed, that Satan had no resting-place there. It was a hopeless thing for Satan to drive him from his purpose: it was a hopeless thing for him to bring all his power to bear, all the violence which he could command, or all the alluring enticements that he could bring. It was in vain; the holiness of Jesus never faltered for one single instant; there was no relaxation of principle; there was no pause; there was no questioning; there was no doubtfulness. And therefore Satan, knowing that he could not turn Christ aside from his purpose, and that he could not hinder the accomplishment of his work, spent all his malignity, his stored-up hostility, in hindering it: or, according to the language of Scripture, in bruising the heel of the seed of the woman.

And precisely to the same cause must we trace the unchangeable malignity which was manifested against Christ by the Jews amongst whom he dwelt. We do not think there is any thing in the low condition of the Lord : we do not think there is any thing in the circumstance of his being of peasant origin ; of his being a man without education, not knowing letters ; a man without influence, mingling in the lower spheres of society ; we do not think there is in this enough to account for his rejection by the Jews, when we remember, that he came commanding such powers of miracle, such stupendous might, that they might well have trusted the destinies of their fallen nation to his direction. But it was that he, the Just, was dwelling in the midst of the unjust : and therefore the very loveliness of his character, the unsullied purity of his life, the zeal and the devotion of his heart, would be the very cause for waking up amongst them deeper and more abiding malignity. And hence it is that in this way was the purity of the nature and the life of Jesus, the great cause of the amount of his sufferings. You will see, that just as this exposed him to greater opposition from his enemies, so did it make him, at the same time, more susceptible. It belongs to high, generous, and noble natures, to care for disgrace. We can easily conceive of one who shall be unjustly condemned to die, and who, with the consciousness of his own innocence, might be content to yield his life. With the lofty contempt which he should feel for the pain and the anguish of his last hour, he would be content that the body and soul should be parted ; he would be content to go to his grave uncomplainingly : but he shrinks from the *shame* ; he shrinks from being dragged before the vile populace, and, looking around on the sea of faces, to find not one which has not written upon it hatred, and mockery, and scorn. This would be the agony of the death of such an one.

Now, just conceive what was the death of the Saviour. All the indignity that could be possibly conceived was heaped on him ; and all the disgrace that might be accumulated on the malefactor, seemed, as it were, to be stored up for his death hour. We sympathize, perhaps, with the physical nature of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. We may conceive something, though inadequately, of the pain which would result from all those external inflictions of which we read, when every quivering fibre would be made in its acute sensibility, an engine of the greatest bodily distress. But we do not so much sympathize with the disgrace laid on the noble spirit ; and remember, that Jesus in his own nature, had all our sensibilities, and all our capacity for suffering. Herein we think the contrast between the character of Christ and the character of all those among whom he mingled, was the cause, in the first place, why the amount of suffering was so greatly increased ; and why, in the next place, he was far more keenly alive to this amount of suffering.

Now we might carry out this argument further, but we pass on, as we proposed, to the second head of our subject, which was to speak of **THE CAUSE OF THE ENDURANCE TO WHICH THE SAVIOUR WAS CALLED.** It was sin that caused all that Christ suffered. There was a mighty controversy between the Creator and his fallen creatures ; and sin was the subject of it. There was a wide separation, an interval of untravelled distance, between God and the

inhabitants of this lower world; and sin had interposed this distance: and the world which God formed for the stately dwelling-place, for the accommodation of his sentient and intelligent creatures, had been now made the abode of misery, and the very lodging-place of woe: and sin was the cause of this.

Now, if we wanted to speak prevailingly and convincingly to you concerning the misery which sin has introduced, it would be very easy for us to expatiate on the contrast which there is subsisting between the first creation of God, as a fair and blooming garden, resting beneath the sun-light of his favour, and the world which hath become changed into a howling wilderness. Or we might go yet further back, and tell you how sin came into heaven, and cast the angels down, and changed them into devils, and built up a prison-house where they should be locked in, and forged the fetters wherewith they should be bound, and kindled the flames wherein they should be tormented. But it is not so much of the apparent consequences of sin, whether it be the external, seen on the face of this spoiled creation; or whether it be that which we are carrying about as evidence in our own bosoms. We would not speak so much of the thorn and the brier that have been made to spring up on the surface of the earth: we would not tell you of the cities which sin hath ruined and laid waste; and how it makes eyes to be fountains of tears, and how it breaks hearts, and separates families, and severs the ties of affectionateness and love. We would not tell you how it has peopled the grave, and sent generation after generation to its last resting-place. But if we wanted to tell you what sin has done; if we wanted to concentrate into one expression all the tremendous amount of what sin has brought, in the way of misery and woe, into the world, we tell you it in this one thing—Christ suffered for sin. Or if we would speak to you of the amount of punishment, of the penalty which sin brings in its train, we might speak of what the Lord hath in store hereafter: we might speak of the worm that never dieth, and the flame that never shall be quenched: we might speak of the awful sentence to be pronounced at the judgment-seat of the Eternal, which shall cause the lips of the scorner to grow white with terror, and shall palsy his heart, and cause his blood to stagnate in his veins. But we tell you yet more tremendously of what sin hath done, when we tell you that CHRIST died for sin; that the penalty was such that all the bounds of creation might have been sought over, and not one but Jesus found who could bear the tremendous weight of all its accumulated punishment. And therefore when we lead you to the cross of Christ, and when we shew you the throes, and the anguish, and the death of the Incarnate God, we think we are telling you, on the one hand, the most prevailingly and the most convincingly, of the evil of sin, and the danger of sin. And this was the cause why Christ came: it was because sin was raising the yell and the groan throughout this fair creation. But Jesus left it not to perish, and would not permit it to remain in its off-cast condition: he came himself to wrestle with the evil spirit, and to subdue and trample it under his feet. He came, he suffered for us, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God:” that he might establish a reconciliation. There had been a long alienation: God, as it were, had hidden his face, because he was holy, and could not be approached without holiness; but



Jesus came, and by his own blood-shedding he opened a royal road, along which the sinner of every shade and every hue of guilt might travel forward, even to the borders of God's restored kingdom. Without holiness none can see the Lord: Jesus (and mark this, I pray you) Jesus died *for* sin, that we his people might die *unto* sin. He not only came to free us from the *condemnation* of guilt, but he came to set us free moreover from its *bondage*. He came to open the prison-doors, and to proclaim liberty to the captive: so that they who had been held too long beneath the thralldom of the evil one—those who had been sold unto the basest of all slavery, were now to be emancipated, and were henceforth to enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free.

And therefore when we tell you of these things; when we speak of pardon, when we speak of holiness, what is it but to bring before you the cross of the Saviour that died for you? To preach the Gospel is, in other words, to preach the death of Christ. If we would speak of peace to the rebel, of pardon to the apostate, of liberty to the captive, the binding up of the wounds that sin hath inflicted; it is only just so far as we preach Christ crucified. If there be one sweet and precious promise in the whole Bible to the believer, it belongs to him only just so far as Jesus hath written it upon him in crimson characters; only just so far as Jesus hath sealed it with his own blood. If there be any thing for us of sparing mercy—if there be any thing of lovely or of gracious, that hath escaped the fall, it is only because of the interposition of Jesus' blood. If there be any hope for the future; if there be any aspirations of the Spirit after God and after eternal blessedness; and if there ever breathe upon our wearied spirits the airs from the land of the redeemed; and if we ever seem to catch the melodiousness of heavenly harplings—it is because Jesus by his own blood-shedding, hath opened mercy's gate, and presented the way whereby heaven may be reached. If I go to the young convert, if I go to one on whose conscience the conviction of sin has been bound, I dare not speak of aught but the blood of Jesus. Such an one might look to the past, but it would be a weary waste, affording not one green spot where he might rest for his soul's comfort. He might look to the future; and there should seem to be only the bursting and the overwhelming tide of divine indignation. But I may tell him of Christ; I may tell him of his precious Gospel, as the ark in which his soul may be shut in and be safe, when the storm shall burst upon the ruined world. Or do I go to the dying bed of one of God's own people, one established in the faith, who has long walked with his Maker, who has been doing his work upon earth, and serving his precious Saviour? I dare not speak to such an one a word of comfort to be derived from his own doings: I dare not tell him, even my grey-headed brother or father, of what God hath enabled him to effect, as the ground of his dying dependance. But even such an one would I remind—aye, till his pulse should quicken, and his heart should beat with anticipated blessedness—that Jesus had died for him; and that the out-poured blood of the Saviour, which had been his soul's comfort, through many a day of trial, conflict, and weariness, and temptation, shall be his rest and his hope even when he is departing. And this, when he shall stand before the judgment-seat, he shall be able to plead, and not one word shall he say of his own doings;

but as he casts his golden crown which Jesus hath given him before his feet, he will render praise, and honour, and glory, and thanksgiving to the Lamb who died for him.

Finally, brethren, if I wished to give comfort to the mother, mourning for her dear babe whom God hath taken from her in its earliest infancy, and as she looked on her coffined little one, she was inclined to shed a mother's tears for her tender babe, this is the only ground of consolation that I would offer her—that Jesus has died for your child; it has been washed in its Saviour's blood; and a very tender God hath taken the little one away ere it lived to commit the sin of rejecting Christ. And, therefore, whensoever as Christian people, holding intercourse with each other, or whensoever in our intercourse as minister and people, these things come before us, we find in the outpoured blood of Jesus, the only ground for our consolation and hope.

Now for the comfort of one's own soul, one would be glad on such a day as this, here to leave our subject; one would be glad to close the consideration of such a matter as this with the consolations that belong to the people of the Lord. But I dare not believe concerning you, in the wildest imagination of my heart, I dare not believe concerning you, that you are all the people of Jesus Christ: I dare not so forget the distinction which the Bible establishes, as to confound you all because you come to the house of God in one single indiscriminate mass. I am bound to think concerning you—and I think it with all thankfulness—that some are the servants of Jesus Christ, that some are indeed the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty: though others there are over whom I cannot but mourn in spirit, and to whom I must now speak a word of affectionate exhortation. I am bound to deal faithfully with your souls; and I dare not take that bread which belongeth to the children, and deal it forth to the strangers who have not come within the compass of the family of God. And, therefore, I say to you, (and methinks it is a most solemn warning,) that these very things, which are for the comfort and assurance of the believer, will be the very ground of the final condemnation of those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ. It will not be that you sinned against the light of nature: it will not be that you rejected the evidence of your own reason: but it will be that Jesus shed his blood; it will be that Jesus sent his Gospel to be preached to you, and that you disregarded it, that you trampled it under foot, and closed your understandings and your hearts against the entrance of that Gospel. And at the great day of account, the witness for the condemnation of Christendom will be fetched in from the garden of Christ's agony, and from the mount whereon his cross was planted: and Jesus himself—the kind, the loving, and the precious Saviour—will himself appear as the awful witness; and he will testify concerning those who disbelieved and rejected him, “I came to them, and I laid down my life for them, and I offered them mercy; and I sent the pleadings of my compassion; and they heard me not. I bore for them thirty-three years of sufferings—I, the Just, in the midst of the unjust; for them I endured three hours of mental anguish, ere I yielded up the ghost. And they would not serve me, but they served mine enemy, who made them no such offers, and who had nought to tempt them with, who could not tell them of eternal life: but for the

paltry possession of earthly gain, or the acquisition of shadowy honours, they have sold themselves.

Dear friends, think of this : pray that God may take away from you, and from those who are dear to your hearts, the hardness under which you have been suffering so long ; that the understanding being enlightened, and the nature of the inner man being altogether changed, you may seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.

## THE SECOND ADAM "A QUICKENING SPIRIT."

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MARGARET STREET CHAPEL, CAVENDISH SQUARE, EASTER SUNDAY, 1835.

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"There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit."—1 CORINTHIANS, xv. 44, 45.

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THE various relationships which subsist among men are strictly correspondent with those relationships which subsist between Jesus Christ and his people. This correspondence is not accidental, but it is designed; and it is an indication of the unity of plan which pervades the works of God, whether we regard him as the God of nature, or the God of providence, or the God of grace. If we trace human relationships to their true origin, we shall find it here: They shadow forth those spiritual relationships which God had assumed towards his people in the person of his Son: and doubtless they were constituted as they are for this very end.

For instance: If we look at the great features of human redemption as they are exhibited to us in the leading facts of the Gospel history which we have been commemorating at this season, we may see Jesus Christ standing to us in several of the most interesting of these relationships. In procuring the redemption of his people by the shedding of his own blood, he assumes the standing of *a husband*, who, by uniting himself to us in the closest union, made himself capable of standing in our place, and answering for our acts. As a husband he paid the redemption price for his spouse. So it is written, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish." Again: in advocating our cause—in order that he may do this effectually, and with an experimental feeling of our wants, he assumes the place of *a brother* unto us. Having partaken of our nature, he submits to its conditions in the most trying and degrading circumstances, that he might have a fellow-feeling with us in all our trials, and in all our sufferings. And so it is written: "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." In this capacity he still acts as our brother, our fellow, our kinsman; and therefore is evidently fitted to be our advocate.



There is another relationship which he assumes to his people, and on which he entered more peculiarly by the event which we this day commemorate—by his resurrection from the dead: and this is, the relationship of a *father*—the quickener, the giver of life and of being to his people. Under this aspect he is represented in the text. We are here directed, either in the way of resemblance or in the way of contrast—or, as I think, and shall endeavour to show, in both—to the great father of the human race, in illustration of the relationship and office which Jesus Christ sustains to his people, in applying to them the redemption which, by his death upon the cross, he procured. "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit."

In order to enter into the true meaning and the full force of these words, it will be necessary to glance at the context; and it will be necessary also (I will add) that you should give me your close and undivided attention: for the difficulty of preserving in our translation the peculiar emphasis of the original, renders the interpretation of the text somewhat intricate.

The text occurs in a passage in which the Apostle is answering the objection to the doctrine of the resurrection, deduced from the difficulty of conceiving how these bodies of ours, after they have been resolved, and the particles of them scattered abroad, should be raised again, and re-formed into bodies. "Some men will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?"

In reply to this objection the Apostle brings several illustrations from nature, in order to show that there are different bodies suitable to different existences, or different modes of existence. For instance: the form of wheat, or of any other grain, has quite a different body as it exists in the bare grain, and as it exists in the full grown ear. So all flesh is not the same flesh: for there is one kind of flesh which is proper to man; another kind which is proper to beasts; another kind which is proper to fishes; and another kind which is proper to birds. In like manner a difference may be observed among the heavenly bodies, one greatly differing from another in glory. "So also is the resurrection of the dead," says the Apostle: that is, a difference, analogous to these which I have just mentioned, is to be found between the body as it now exists in its humiliation, and as it will exist subsequent to its resurrection: for "it is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." And then follows the expression with which the text stands more immediately connected: "It is sown a natural body;" or, to preserve the emphasis of the origin, as well as to shew its connexion with the words before us—"It is sown *a body proper to a soul*;" "it is raised a spiritual body;" or, "*a body proper to a spirit*." For as there is a body proper to a man, as well as a body proper to a beast; so, by analogy, in the case of the resurrection, there is a body proper to a soul, and there is a body which is proper to a spirit. "And so it is written, The first Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit."

What I wish to observe, and what is lost—perhaps necessarily lost—in our translation, is this: That when it is said, "The first Adam was made a living soul," there is a plain reference to the assertion in the preceding verse, "There

is a natural body"—or, if one might use such an expression, "There is a *soulish* body; that is, a soul properly suited to the body—*σῶμα ψυχικόν*: and when it is said, "The last Adam was made a quickening spirit," there is a plain reference to the other assertion, "There is a spiritual body," or, a body proper to a spirit—*σῶμα πνευματικόν*. And so in the verse following the text, "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual"—or, proper to a spirit—"but that which is natural" to a soul: and afterward "that which is spiritual," proper to a spirit.

If I have made myself understood in pointing out this connexion of the text with the context—which will be quite obvious at once to every reader of the original—I think it furnishes us with the true key to the nature of the comparison which is here made between the first Adam and the last Adam. It is a comparison, first, in the way of resemblance; and, secondly, in the way of distinction or contrast. The point in which our Lord, the last Adam, resembles the first man Adam, is this—in that he is the federal head of a race; the covenant head of a race. For as Adam by creation was constituted the head, the representative, and the fountain of derivation, to all mankind who were to spring out of his loins; so the man Christ Jesus, by resurrection (which in Scripture is called "a new creation") and by being endowed with the fulness of the Spirit, was constituted the head, and representative, and fountain of derivation, as it were, to the whole body of the church, or of the elect; who were to be begotten again from the womb of death by him, as the "quickeningspirit," by the power of the Holy Ghost, which he possessed in its fulness.

Here, then, is the point of resemblance between the first and the last Adam. As the natural life, or the life of the soul, is by every one to be traced to the first man Adam, as its great original; so the spiritual life in the believer, or the life of the spirit, is to be traced to Jesus Christ, the last Adam, as its great original.

But here, however, the resemblance between the two Adams ends. The contrast on the other hand is two-fold. There is, first, the contrast between the substance of each; that whereas the first man, Adam, was made a soul, the last Adam was made a spirit: and secondly, there is a contrast between the quality or the character of each substance; that whereas the soul was but a "living" soul, the spirit was a "quickeningspirit," life-giving, or life-causing, spirit. That is, as I conceive, that while Adam—endued with a soul, or lower life—had placed within him the power of continuing, by means of his descendants, that life which he himself possessed; so Jesus Christ—raised from the dead, constituted a spirit, partaking (that is) of a higher life—is invested with the power, not only of continuing life, but of quickening others into the same life with himself—causing them to live—communicating life unto the dead. Adam was but a living soul, capable of continuing the same life in others who should succeed him; but Christ, by his resurrection from the dead, has become "a quickeningspirit," capable of giving life unto the dead; thus verifying his own words—"As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will."

Having thus endeavoured to explain the meaning of the text by the light thrown upon its context, I shall now seek to make a practical use of it, by

showing its bearing, first, on the foundation of the Christian's salvation; secondly, on the trial of his present condition; and, thirdly, on the blessedness of his future prospects.

First, see the practical bearing ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHRISTIAN'S SALVATION. The passage opens before us that which constitutes the great mystery both of our fallen condition and of our redemption. The Apostle here enumerates only two men of all the men that have ever lived: because all men stand in such a relationship to the first Adam, and all in the church of Christ stand in such a relationship to the second Adam, as they can stand in to no other man. Though we are not the immediate sons of Adam, we are born in his likeness, and we inherit his condition: and this is the way in which it can be inherited from no other man. We do not see, in the ordinary course of human generation, that all children are born with what is peculiar in the sinful propensities, or in the degraded habits, of their immediate progenitors. True it is that bad example, and the neglect of instruction, and the absence of prayer for God's blessing, do often cause the sins of men to be in a measure hereditary: but this is easily traced to its true cause. Put the child of the most worthless and degraded of parents into Christian training, and under the advantages of the instructions of piety and of virtue; and you will not discover in him—at least, generally—any traces of those crimes which disgrace his parents.

Whence, then, do we derive the tenet of the universal corruption? For if you should imagine that all sin arises from evil example, and the absence of education, experience will soon undeceive you. Although, by dint of care, you may guard against the outbreking of those sins which have been peculiar to the immediate progenitor; though you may in this way stop the progressive and accumulating power of evil, which otherwise, in successive generations, would grow and increase to such an extent as to render life in this world absolutely intolerable, you will not be able by your utmost care to root out the evil which is in the heart of man. Though the child does not, as it were, commence its sinful career at the point which its profligate parent may have reached, (for what would become of the world if it were so?) yet there is an evil within human nature—there is an evil in every human being which no care, no training can eradicate—which no absence of bad example can prevent from exhibiting itself at some season. And what is the inference from this, but that there is a connexion between us and the first man Adam, which does not subsist between us and our immediate parents, or any intermediate link of the chain by which we are connected with our first progenitor? And so it is written of Adam, that he "begot a son in his own image, after his own likeness;" who thus deriving from him his life of nature, shared with Adam in all the miserable circumstances of his fallen condition. Thus "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed on all men, for that all have sinned." All have sinned in Adam. In fact, when God created Adam, he created all men: there has been no creation of the human species since that creation. All therefore stood, and all fell in Adam: all in him became not only exposed to the consequences, but also infected with the very nature, of his sin.

This, it is admitted, is an unopened mystery as to the way and the method of

it: but it is a matter of common observation as to the fact itself. We cannot explain how the sin of Adam attaches to every being of the human race, but it is a plain matter of fact which meets us at every turn.

Now the use which is to be made of this in the text, is this: That there is, in truth, no greater difficulty in the idea that having union with the last Adam as a quickening spirit—with Jesus Christ raised from the dead—we are endowed with his life and his likeness, and are thereby partakers of his condition, as much as we are, in our natural state, partakers of the life, and likeness, and condition of the first Adam. By raising him from the dead, God has constituted his Son Jesus Christ a quickening spirit: as a man invested with the fulness of the spirit, he quickens with eternal life, as many as the Father has given him. He *so* quickens them, as that they are his seed as truly now as they have been hitherto the seed of the first Adam; and *so* his seed, that they have his life, that they have his likeness, that they are the partakers in all the blessedness of his condition. Even as Christ is, so are we in this world.

Here then, beloved brethren, is the only foundation of our salvation; it is the life which Christ now possesses. Union with him in his risen glory is the only source of spiritual life, the only link by which we can retain it. There is no way of being saved but by becoming the recipients of this new life from Christ; no other way of being saved but by our becoming thus the part of a new creation, members of a new body, joined to a new head, built upon a new foundation. Of one or the other Adam, we must necessarily hold our life; for there is no other head of life except these two Adams, the first and the last: and if our life be but of the first Adam, then we are partakers of that life under the forfeit incurred by the fall; we have but, as it were, a kind of dying life, or living death—whichever you please to have it. But if it be of the last Adam, then are we partakers of that life which he received out of death. He is the quickening spirit; but we are spirits quickened by him: he living by the Father, and we living by Him; He the living stone, the tried stone, the sure foundation-stone; but we also living stones, built up upon him, a spiritual building for the habitation of the Lord: He the vine; we the branches grafted into him, deriving the living sap from him as the root.

Here then, my brethren, I repeat, I would affectionately urge it upon you—here is the only foundation for a sinner's salvation. Away with all the vain subterfuges which the wisdom of this world hath invented wherewith to deceive the souls of men. Away with all the shallow resources of a ruined nature; as if man, by his own efforts, or by any power within himself—by his prayers, his repentance, his tears, his sorrows, or any other mode, could find his way back to God. Away with all dependence on such and such works; and equally with such and such frames of spirit. Away with all dependence on a sound faith. Salvation is not to be found in these things: it is not to be found in the reformation of conduct; it is not to be found in a difference of feeling; it is not to be found in an act of the mind, whatever the act may be; it is not to be found in the feelings of the heart, whatever those feelings may be: but it is to be found in a vital union with Jesus Christ, and with a supernatural existence in Christ. "Ye must be born again:" "Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye must be born again." You must live by union to Jesus Christ: you must live by feeding upon Jesus Christ; for he hath said, "Except ye eat the flesh of



the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you : " which is equivalent to his having said, " Except you have that union with me which alone is to be sustained and kept up by this spiritual food, you have no life in you."

O then, brethren, submit your ways to the ways of God. Be content to be recipients of his grace. Behold, God has laid help upon One that is mighty, who, having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, is now anointed with a higher life, wherewith to quicken you, and to make you alive, by grafting you into himself. Seek not for life from yourself; but be willing to receive it as a boon from Christ.

But further, let us look at this subject as it bears ON THE TRIALS OF THE CHRISTIAN'S PRESENT CONDITION. It furnishes the great Christian foundation. For what is the Christian's state? He is united to the risen Saviour; he is quickened by that quickening spirit; he is endowed with higher life: and yet he dwells in a body derived from the first man Adam, who was only made a living soul, and by transgression became a fallen, guilty, and sinful soul. Contrast the first Adam and his being, with the last Adam and his being. " There is," says the Apostle, " a body proper to a soul; and there is a body proper to a spirit." But the great peculiarity in the Christian's condition in the present state of warfare, is this: that while he is a quickened spirit in union with Christ the quickening spirit, he yet has a body proper only to a soul, by still having, in his own nature, union with the first Adam: he has a body which, even *in* its origin, was fitted to contain no higher life than that of a living soul; which *since* its origin has been deteriorated and injured by the fall; and which yet must serve as the habitation (rather say the *prison-house*) to a spirit quickened by union with Him who quickeneth all things.

Bear this in mind, brethren, and it will throw a striking light on many passages in Scripture which are descriptive of the Christian experience. For instance, " We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this (tabernacle) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." Again: " We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." And again: " O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" What do these (and a variety of similar passages which will readily occur to you) express, but the desires of the quickened spirit to be released from this prison-house in which it is pent up, and shackled, and hindered in all those exercises which it desires to have with God? They express the longing of the quickened spirit for an abode more suitable to its powers and its faculties; for a body which will not be a clog, but a help, in its goings towards the Author of its being.

And does not this also point out the Christian's *resource* under such trials? What is it, but to walk by faith and not by sight? What is it, but to realize

in the actings of our faith, what St. Paul realized when he said, "The body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." What is it, but to keep under the body? What is it, but to crucify and mortify this tabernacle of the flesh, that we may give free scope to the quickening Spirit? What is it, but to realize what the Apostle says: "If ye be risen with Christ"—that is, if you be indeed thus quickened of him—"seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life"—your quickened life—"is hid with Christ in God."

And O! what does this part of the subject say, to those who feel no such burden, no such incumbrance, while they tabernacle in the body of this death; who find the enjoyments of sense congenial to the inner man? O, how obvious must it be that such know not Christ as a quickening Spirit! How obvious that it is "because there is no life in them!" "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh:" and what is the alternative? "If we live after the flesh we shall die:" "To be carnally-minded is death."

But finally, let us look at this subject, as it bears also ON THE CHRISTIAN'S FUTURE PROSPECTS. We are as yet, indeed, in the natural body—the body proper to a soul: but there is a spiritual body. Let us not forget that the body is a part of man as essentially as the spirit; and that as we are now by faith quickened in spirit, so there is a renewal unto holiness to this body also, which shall be revived, and glorified, and changed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

This shall be—when? At the second glorious advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Now* he is gone to the Father; *now* he is quickening those whom the Father hath given him. He is hewing out the living stones, and building them together for a temple of the Lord: and when all the stones are prepared, and the number of the elect is accomplished, then will he return that he may gather all into one; not merely in a spiritual union—such a union as can be apprehended by faith; but also in a bodily, local union—such a union as can be apprehended by sense also.

This has been too much lost sight of in the church in these latter times. Man has been too much spoken of, and spoken to, as if he had no body to be saved; as if the saving of his soul were every thing. And this, besides giving a vagueness and indistinctness to the great subject of redemption, does also deprive the Lord Jesus Christ of the glory of one part of his work as "a quickening spirit." For in deriving from him as the life, we must derive in body as well as in spirit. He came to save, not the soul, but to save the man, both body and soul. We are to be like him, not in spirit only, but, as the promise of Scripture expressly is, in body also. And then—but not till then—that which is imperfect shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall have come. It is this which will be the close of humiliation—this that will be the destruction of the last enemy. It is this that will blot out the last sharp and dreary memorial of the flesh, and

consummate that living hope to which God hath begotten us again by the Spirit. For as the resurrection of Christ shows us the perfection and sufficiency of his work, so it is our resurrection that will bring to perfection in us the fruit of his work. As it was His resurrection that shewed him to have come out from under the effects of imputed sin, into the possession of the unclouded glory which he had with the Father before the world was; so it is our resurrection that will shew us to have come out of the course of sin and of the flesh, into the unclouded vision and perpetual enjoyment of that glory. As it was His resurrection that shewed him to have been the conqueror of Satan; so it is our resurrection that will shew us to be conquerors over all evil through him. As it was by His resurrection that he was declared to be the Son of God with power; so it is our resurrection by which we shall be manifested to be sons of God: for though *now* sons, we are not yet manifestly so; "it does not *yet* appear what we shall be." Though *now* we have eternal life, that life is not manifest; it is as yet hid with Christ in God:" but "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory."

O then, beloved brethren, think not lightly of the resurrection of the body. Be not deceived by a miscalled spirituality (which is not the spirituality of the Bible), which would direct all your attention to the soul, and make little of what becomes of the body; which will hold up before you as the object of your hope, the passage of the soul into its disembodied state, and leave in darkness and obscurity the re-animating of the body in the likeness, and its transmutation into the glorious image, of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept:" and as surely as the first-fruits have been gathered, so certainly shall the harvest follow.

See in this the true discomfiture of Satan: see in this the ultimate triumph of divine power: see in this the final glory of the last Adam as a quickening spirit: that in the very body, as well as the soul, wherein you have rebelled, the last traces of sin shall be obliterated, and the Lord Jesus Christ shall be magnified both in our bodies and in our spirits.

And now may I conclude with the Apostle's prayer: "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

## THE HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION.

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REV. M. O'SULLIVAN, A.M.

ST. MARK'S CHURCH, PENTONVILLE, APRIL 26, 1835.

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"Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question."—ACTS, xxiii. 6.

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THIS was the declaration of St. Paul when he stood before a partial tribunal, surrounded by adverse hearers. There was injustice on the tribunal; their was hostility against him on the part of those who were assembled: but he was sustained by that blessed hope for which he was that day called in question.

Such was the influence of this hope upon the early Christians, as well as upon the apostles, that even the philosophers among the heathens accounted them persons of diseased understanding. Nor was it strange that they should form this opinion: for, if the hope which influenced their own actions were true; if the principles upon which they regulated their lives were correct; the Christians were of all men least wise, as they were of all men confessedly most miserable. This was accordingly the opinion which the heathen philosophers entertained. They saw how patiently the followers of One whom they regarded only as a crucified man, endured the afflictions to which their calling exposed them. They saw that terror could not shake them; nor could the blandishments of friendship soothe them, so as that they should renounce what they esteemed their mad opinions. They saw with what a triumphant assurance they gloried in their reproach; with how firm and how scornful an indifference they looked away from the glories of the world: and while they beheld men, as it would seem upon their principles, thus rejoicing in their *shame*, and indifferent to the proper motives of man's exertion, they naturally chose rather to consider the Christians mad than to acknowledge themselves to be in error.

Yet these philosophers were not unacquainted with the doctrine that there was to be a life after death; nor was this a subject upon which they were indifferent, of which they were regardless. On the contrary, it was a subject to which they devoted their attention closely, and upon which they have left us ample record to prove their industry, as well as their zeal, in the study of it. In fact, the human mind cannot contentedly repose in the idea, that, when the mortal crumbles into dust, human existence is ended. Man cannot repose upon such an idea: and accordingly before the light of revelation shone upon him, and before the grave was conquered, and death swallowed up in immortality, men did apply themselves to investigate such precarious and uncertain



evidences as nature furnished, to give them a hope that they might live again. They saw how the flower springs from the decayed seed; how the winged and animated insect proceeds from the torpid worm. They saw how in the external world nothing is altogether destroyed: and they would not believe that the mind of man was to perish by a change which was incapable of destroying the principle of existence even in the meanest reptile.

Thus they had a hope, and often it was a strong hope, of a life after death; but it was not an *abiding* hope. It was not a hope which could remain fixed within their souls secure against the assaults of sophistry, or steadfast even under mental depression. It served, no doubt, for many an important use. It gave majesty to the philosopher's speculations: it refined the tone of civilized society: and it shed a pure, a solemn, and a tender interest over the conferences of the wise, and the friendships of the affectionate. But as it had in the deductions of human judgments its sole foundation, it necessarily partook of the frailties of human nature, variable in its strength, and tardy in its operations. In retirement and security, when the philosopher calmly examined his hopes, it had considerable power over his mind: he acknowledged its interest, and he felt and respected his authority. But in the sudden emergencies of life; amidst the hasty sallies of the passions, when terror shook the soul, or the senses warred against virtue; in these, and all such cases, the existence of the hope was scarcely to be perceived, and its authority was uniformly disregarded.

The hope on which Christian men rely was different in its *origin*, as well as its *nature*. For this there was no need to pursue long processes of reasoning; for this there was no need to scrutinize nature, and see what comparisons she might suggest that would encourage it. The Christian had seen unquestionable proofs of the resurrection; he felt the powers of the world to come; and therefore was his faith steadfast. *To the heathen*, God spake through probable analogy, and arguments which his reason might examine. *To the Christian*, he spoke with authority by his only-begotten Son; by whom also he made the worlds. Here was the foundation of the Christian's faith: and as the foundation was strong, so was the belief steadfast, and the hope effectual. And yet upon this hope the heathen thought that none but madmen could build: it was to them foolishness. They would acknowledge in our blessed Lord only "a man of sorrows," one who had "no form or comeliness that they should desire him." They saw him through his life occupying no splendid eminence in the world's regard; and in his death experiencing the torments of the vilest malefactor. They saw him, not like their own demagogues, terminating a bright and terrible career in that blaze of glory in which a hero sets, and leaves the world behind him; but concluding a life of sorrows by an end as ignominious as it was painful; condemned among an obscure people, and incapable of escaping the condemnation. And while they beheld him thus "despised and rejected of men," so they did esteem him also "stricken of God and afflicted."

The Christian looked upon the life of his blessed Master in a different light from that which guided others: *they* did not see our Lord; they saw no further than the tabernacle in which he dwelt, the veil he had assumed in his humiliation: the Christian, through that veil, saw where the glory dwelt that was full of grace

and truth. The heathen thought he had crushed what he accounted a pestilential superstition, when he had put its Founder to an ignominious death. He thought of death as the natural man might think of the insults of the persecuting populace; the forlorn condition of the sufferer, the torment, and the shame. The Christian saw that this was the death his Blessed Master *came* to die; that this was the struggle in which he had won from death his victory; that this was the mighty effort by which he had burst the chains of death, loosed the bonds of sin, and brightened the grave with the glory of the resurrection. Therefore, as the Christian looked upon the life and the death of our Blessed Lord with light so different to that which exhibited him to the heathen; so was it natural that the blessed hope of the Christian should elevate him into acts and endurances which caused his persecutors to marvel. The world was in arms against the Christian; but his hopes, his conversation, were not in the world. The names of the Christians were blotted from the rolls of society's cold intercourse: but they were written in the Book of Life. The law was fierce against them; power gave them no protection. The law issued dread proclamations; and the loosened passions of the insatiate people fiercely raged against them. But through all the storms, through all the tumult, they adhered to the principles they professed, and were supported by the hope that was vouchsafed to them; ready to sink, if God so willed it, in the dread commotion; but not to be influenced by all that power or terror could do to loose them from the hold to which they clung, to dis sever them from that hope which was the anchor of their souls.

This was the faith and the conduct of Christian men, at a time when their profession of obedience to the Lord Jesus was held in universal reprobation. And in looking back to those days, and in comparing them with the times which succeeded, we cannot fail to be impressed with a strong sense of man's perverseness. Whilst the law forbade the profession of Christianity, and whilst the zeal of a misguided people persecuted its professors; while they were obliged to hide within closed doors for fear of the Jews, and while, as they went forth, they found some to denounce and some to persecute them wherever they appeared, they sustained all faithfully: their hopes gave comfort to them, and their faith was fearlessly professed. But when persecution declined, so it would seem did the faith of Christian men likewise fail: then the world became more awful in its attractions than it had been in its terrors; then the passions which demanded instant gratification rebelled against a hope which had its object in futurity; and then it was, when heathen idolatry had passed away, that the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life, and spiritual idolatry, were insinuated into the soul, and raised up to the ascendancy from which the idols of earlier days had been violently displaced.

It would be happy indeed for us, if we could justly consider observations of this kind applicable to other times than the present, and to other beings than ourselves. But it is a truth, to which the memories of all who hear me will bear testimony, and which many may esteem it a tedious common-place to repeat, that the hope for which the early Christians held temporal afflictions as matters of no moment, and for which they were ready to renounce every worldly

advantage, is a hope from which naturally our cares and our stations are so remote, that it is not, and cannot plausibly be termed, the anchor of our souls. Is this the case? Examine yourselves, and say whether your hope in Christ resembles the hope of the early Christian, or the hope of the heathens: whether your hope is a kind of ornament to your life, or is its impelling and sufficient momentum. What think you of Christ? To the apostles he was the substitute for all the enjoyment they forfeited; the solace for all the misery they endured; their guide; their companion, I might almost say, for he was constant in their thoughts. Is he so to you? Bewell assured that heathenism has not departed, because its shrines have been made bare, and its altars overthrown. What was it in which heathenism was formidable? Was it that the earth groaned under its temples? Was it that the air was darkened by its idolatrous ceremonies? Or was it that it had made its residence in the hearts of those who did not worship in the spirit of truth? And is it not a mournful truth, and a truth to which there needs no necessity of giving proof, that now, at the present day, in every heart which the Spirit of the Lord does not sanctify, and upon which the law of the Lord is not impressed, there is the spirit of heathenism, and that law of death which heathenism inculcated? It surely is so. See now how it is. In truth we should put to ourselves this question. We know perfectly well that man lives by hope, as far as this world is concerned. The hope of pleasure can rouse him; the hope of wealth can excite him; the hope of distinction can agitate him; and the hope of immortality remain barren and unproductive within his soul. This world is full of interests and affections. Life is kept in perpetual agitation by the active affections of man; and the passions which agitate him, the pleasures which incite him, the hopes which deceive him, are the cause of this agitation: and he is comparatively indifferent to that one hope which cannot be deceived or destroyed; the hope which is beyond the reach of fraud, and the shock of accident; the hope, to communicate which God sent into the world his only begotten Son; to confirm which our Saviour has died for our sins, and risen again for our justification.

Do not mistake me. Do not suppose that I mean to impute to you, knowingly or wilfully, indifference to this hope. I am fully persuaded, that to any frequenter of public worship—I will say the coldest and most careless—if it were proposed that he should have all the enjoyment which the world gives, on condition of formally and for ever renouncing the hope that Christ hath purchased; he would (I speak of the most cold and careless) he would reject the paltry bribe for which his salvation would be renounced, and he would cling to the ill-assured, because not properly sought for, hope, that he might obtain mercy. But the enemy of souls adopts no such clumsy device: he asks of no man to renounce for ever his hopes of salvation. He simply asks you to *postpone* the laying hold of that hope: he asks you only to give him *to-day*: each day he renews his demand, that you shall defer unto the morrow the seeking that hope which purifieth and saveth; and relies upon that, if he can induce you to persevere in this practice of procrastination: without ever demanding a formal denial of your hopes, he will produce within you an effectual separation from hope.

I wish every man who has upon any occasion said to himself that he would

defer seeking that which is precious, would propose to his own mind what in reality he *does* say, not what, to satisfy appearances, he *seems* to say. What is the meaning of a man's saying that he will give *to-morrow* to God? Is it *promising* to-morrow, or to *refuse* to-day? To-morrow is not yours; you have no assurance that it will be bestowed upon you, no promise. "Night certifieth night, and day certifieth day," in the world around: but there is no promise that the living to-day, that man's drawing the breath of life to-day, shall ensure his breathing that same breath to-morrow: that he who is a pensioner upon the bounty of an hour, a precarious dependant upon Him who giveth every moment, has any certain promise of the next. Just judge, each of you, what is in reality the appearance of the meaning of that conditional and postponed promise; and say whether it is not the truth, that if you say in your heart, "I will to-morrow address myself to God," you are not, in truth, saying this, and this only—"I will *not* to-day address myself to God?" It is not giving a *promise*, but a *denial*.

Let me put to you, what you yourselves would be disposed to judge—put to you a case, and say, how would you be disposed to judge in a matter of far less moment. Suppose a man came to offer himself to be engaged in your service, and that he made his proposals thus: "I wish you to hire me as your servant: I wish you to bestow upon me food, and raiment, and shelter, and protection: and I in return give you a promise, that at some future period, when it shall be less painful to me than it is now, I will in return for these services that you bestow upon me, render to you such services as I am capable of performing. It is not that I now find my interest separated from your service; it is not that I have more real enjoyment in the courses in which I am engaged than I would in performing duty to you: it is not that these courses conduce more to my worldly interest; but yet I have some entanglement from which I am not willing at this moment to be loosed; some occupation in which it is pleasing to me sometime longer to continue. And therefore if you will take me nominally into your service, and give me all the benefits of service—I will, not now, but at some future period (I cannot exactly specify the time or the hour)—I will give myself in return to your service." Now what would you think of an engagement of this nature? Would you think it was the engagement of a rational man? Would you not think it was the engagement of one who was mad enough to think he could impose upon you, or that you were so insane that he could impose upon you, and now desired to impose upon you? And will you live day after day in the habit of making to Him upon whom you are dependent for the life you breathe—will you live day after day in the habit of making to Him such professions as would cause you to dismiss from your sight and presence any servant on earth who should presume to address them to you?

Am I not, then, justified in saying, that he who promises that he will at some future period turn himself to holiness, is not promising that he will at some period turn, but is simply denying that he will at the *present* time? And observe the danger: it keeps up a false and perilous complacency in the soul: it deludes you into the notion that you can at some future period turn *yourself*; and it leaves your life meantime, under the influence of sin, which is weaving



its chains more closely, and wasting the strength of your heart, and causing you—while you promise at some future period you will awaken to a hope of glory—causing you to live in a state in which, if the doctrine of a future world present itself to your mind, it should be a terror, not a hope. What is it that causes you to be indifferent to this great influence upon yourselves? Examine for yourselves; and, before the world has been stripped of its delusions by an unconquerable hand, unveil it for yourselves, and compare its promises and possessions with the promises of immortality. Are the promises of this world and its possessions so great, as that you should give yourselves up altogether? Is the hope of future blessedness so poor a thing, as to be wisely relinquished for the transient felicities of earth? Are the objects of human avarice and ambition so mighty—are the appetites within the heart of man so resistless, as to justify even to ourselves, the being called off by them from that momentous question—“What shall I do to be saved?” He does not think so to whom the hour has come; to whom the question is to be, not “What shall I do?” but “What have I done?” Wherein have I trusted that I may have hope? He does not think so to whom the hour has come when death presents itself, either as a beneficent angel, who veils under the solemnity of a strong regard the intimation of approaching joy, or as a tormentor, who desires the despairing victim to read the anticipation of the world to come in the wickedness of the life that has been passed.

Shall we, then, to many of whom this hour may be at hand, continue to comport ourselves as though it were never to come? And shall our conversation be so wholly in this world, that death, whenever it comes, shall surprise us in the midst of our complex machinations? And this, what is it? Will you say that the influence of the world is such that it interposes between you and God; that the petty objects of this life are so engrossing, as that they do not allow you to think of Him, in whose presence this whole world is as a small grain of dust in the balance, yea, as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth? Why is it that this world has the power to eclipse the light of divine truth? It is because you do not look upon it with a mind which the Gospel has enlightened; and that you do not read the character of the world with a mind which the Gospel has instructed to read it. If you did so, you would find that God has traced upon this world itself, in characters which cannot be misunderstood, warnings not to bind yourselves in implicit confidence to it. Do you not see that the heavenly bodies increase and decay? Do you not see that the seasons swell into the ripe summer bloom, and sink again into winter's desolation? Do you not see those insects, whose rejoicing is so thick over the air, at one time swarming with them, at another time all quiet, and calm, and desolate? And shall these things be written night and day—might I not say, too, when I speak of night and day, that sleep convinces you? Could not He who made us, make us so that we should not require the indulgence or the refreshment of sleep? Could He not thus, if it so pleased him, lengthen our time, prolong our existence, by taking out of oblivion the hours now given to it, and leave us still fresh, without so humiliating a means of repairing strength? But it is useful, greatly useful. Every night that we lie down to rest we should remember, that we give ourselves up for a time into

a state, in which, if it pleased God to call us away, we could not lift a voice to pray for mercy. Thus day and night all warn us of the time when we must lie down in the dust.

To what purpose, my brethren, is this given, if these warnings cry to us as we hear distant music, without knowing the intelligent words that accompany it—if we hear it as the followers of our Lord heard his parables, when they received the words and “understood not” the signification? Shall we be indifferent, when God makes that world from which our dangers are to come thus sensibly to preach unto us? Shall we see, without turning to our edification, the still more solemn and affectionate appeals, under which our hearts are often saddened, though our lives are not changed; the strong man suddenly bowed down; the enterprising called off from his complex machinations; and the pride of the young heart falls in the bloom of youthful hope, withered by the breath of the angel of death!

O brethren, let not these warnings be in vain; but let them keep up in our minds the thought of that solemn hour, which will cause all the hopes of this world to be eclipsed and lose its enchantments; and will make us seek, more and more earnestly, that hope, which can render life pure, and death tranquil. Without that hope, when the final hour approaches, when friendship can no longer soothe us, and vanity can no more be flattered, and the world will not continue its delusions, what is the hope, what is the state of the afflicted and dying man—one who looks back upon a misspent life, and deplorably acknowledges before God, that there is not one good deed to which he can cling, for that all is marked by disobedience towards God, and black ingratitude towards his Redeemer? That is the hour when no chequered deeds of mingling good and evil can satisfy the awakened spirit: that is the hour when all human dependence melts away, and nothing endureth but the faith which has been builded upon the Rock of Ages; the hope which relies not upon the merits of man, but upon the mercies of the Saviour.

But to him whose life has been familiar with this purifying hope, the hour of death is not an hour of bitterness. Many a time have surviving friends been assured of the witness of its presence, and have seen the departing Christian go to his repose with exultation—go as one departeth, when the voice of his blessed Lord calleth him. O what a death is this! In that fearful hour, when life is mingling with eternity, and in the dread commotion mortal hearts are sinking; when the whole head is sick, and the heart faint, and life is rushing into eternity—think what a consolation it is, to be sustained by that sure and steadfast anchor which is cast within the veil: to hear, through the terrors of the storm, the voice of the Redeemer, “Be not afraid; be of good cheer; it is I:” to know that he is not to go alone in his own insufficiency, before a God whom he has offended; but that the Saviour, whom he has confessed in life, will confess him before his Father, who is in heaven, and be his Mediator at the judgment-seat.

May God, in his great mercy, grant that this shall be our portion, that we shall feel our trust in Christ's mercy, in that hour when all other trust is found vain; and when we have entered into that region, where flesh and blood enter not, may our hopes be found certain, and may we hear the good

assurance given, that our warfare is accomplished, and that our iniquity is pardoned.

I will not longer detain you. You will have to go and perform that work by which the ministration of the church is kept up, and by which the Gospel is to be preached to the poor. I shall simply say to you, that as you love the Gospel, you will be glad to distribute of your abundance for its support.

## THE ANALOGY BETWEEN THE WORKS OF NATURE AND THE WORKS OF GRACE.

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REV. W. JAY,

GREAT QUEEN STREET CHAPEL, MAY 1, 1835 \*.

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“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.—ISAIAH, lv. 10, 11.

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Now, my brethren, the literal description which is contained in this passage, is again partly fulfilled and partly fulfilling. The winter is past; the clouds pour down their treasures, and the grateful soil is teeming with the promises of loveliness and fertility; and every rural walk is beginning to remind us of the language of David's fine ode on the spring: “He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the service of cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.”

In this case two things should follow. First, we should adore that God who never leaves himself without a witness, in that he is continually doing us good, and sending us rains and fruitful seasons, and filling our hearts with food and gladness. For why are we thus indulged? Have we abandoned our sins as a people? Have we returned with weeping and supplication unto Him from whom we have so deeply revolted? Have we duly improved any of his former loving-kindnesses? Yea, have we not in numberless instances converted them into weapons of rebellion against our infinite Benefactor? “Not unto us, O Lord;” “It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.” And O that his goodness may lead us to repentance, and that while again “the earth shall yield her increase, God, even our own God shall bless us.”

And the second is, to derive religious instruction from it. There are very few persons who are really lovers of nature. The greater part of mankind are carried away by something artificial, and they are much more struck with the works of man than the works of God. But as Cowper says, “God made the country, and man made the town.” The excellent Mr. Dodd, when pressed by his

\* Anniversary Sermon for the Wesleyan Missionary Society.



companions to see a fine mansion, sat still, surveying a flower that had arrested his eye, and said, "I see more in this flower than in all the mansions I have ever seen, or can see. 'Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.'"

"So it is when the mind is imbued  
With a well-judging taste from above;  
Then whether embellished or rude,  
'Tis nature alone that we love.  
The achievements of art may amuse,  
May even our wonder excite;  
But groves, hills, and valleys diffuse  
A lasting and sacred delight."

And yet we have met with persons who have a real taste for nature as nature: but then they have never regarded it as the handmaiden of grace—never made it the representative and the remembrancer of better things. Yet there is a striking analogy between the works of nature and the works of grace. It is very true that God has magnified his word above all his name. "Behold," says he, "I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." The blessings of the Scripture are infinitely superior to the blessings of the field: yet the one furnishes illustrations of the other, and was designed to furnish them; and by a holy chemistry we may extract heaven from earth; by a holy mechanism we may make the creature a ladder by which to ascend to the Creator; by spiritual-mindedness and meditation, we may render every place a house of God, every avenue the gate of heaven, every object a preacher. The rising sun may tell us of the Sun of Righteousness rising with healing under his wings. The refreshing dew may remind us of the doctrine of divine grace. And says Isaiah, "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

But it appears to me, after reflection, that Isaiah, in these words, means to trace a resemblance between these natural and spiritual influences: first, in their divine origin; secondly, in the importance of their produce; thirdly, in their mode of operation; and, fourthly, in their success. Consider what we say; and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

We apprehend, Isaiah means to trace the resemblance between these natural and spiritual influences, first IN THEIR DIVINE ORIGIN. They have one and the same Author. "The rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven;" so does the Gospel. "My word," says God, "which proceedeth out of my mouth." "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." There are some who imagine the Apostle James here means to establish a distinction between these gifts—between the good gifts and the perfect gifts; applying the good gifts to earthly, and the perfect gifts to the spiritual benefits. This is perhaps too curious for the text itself: but it is true that there is such a difference between them: and it is equally true that they all descend from above; that they all come down from the God of all grace. This is unquestioned with regard to the snow and the rain. Every one knows that if God were to with-

hold these, no creature could obtain a fall of the one, or a shower of the other. "Can any among the vanities," asks Jeremiah, "of the Gentiles, give rain?" And what is the inference now to be derived from this? If God gives the less, who gives the greater? Is light from him, and is spiritual illumination from ourselves? "No," says the Apostle, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Does the life of an insect or of a plant come from God, and is the life which is emphatically called the life of God—is this self-derived? "No," says the Apostle, "you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Does the verdure of the meadows, and the fertility of the fields and the gardens, praise God; and do our duties, and good works, and grace, praise ourselves? "No," says the Apostle, "if we are filled with all the fruits of righteousness, it is by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." "This people," says God, "have I formed for myself: they shall show forth my praise."

And this brings us to a particular reflection; for you cannot suppose that we are going to dwell at large, this morning, upon the evidences of the divine original of the Gospel—evidences which successively engage your attention from time to time; evidences derived from prophecy, from miracles, and from the character of the Saviour; and from the establishment and the spread of Christianity, and from various other proofs—proofs so convincing, that the man who does not perceive the force of them, must surely either have closed his eyes himself, or have compelled God to do it for him. But our design now, is  
 tonly to what analogy supplies.

It is commonly, and it is justly, supposed, that the works of nature lead to God as their Author; that there are upon them impression of Deity; that such is the immensity of some, and the minuteness of others, and the perfection of the whole, so far transcend all human endeavours to imitate them, that we are constrained to say,

"The hand that made them is divine."

"This is the finger of God." So it is with the Gospel. To me, I confess, the internal evidences of revelation are more powerful than the external. Not that we give up the external, not that we undervalue them; yea, we consider them unanswerable: if not, why have they not been answered? Why, to this hour, has no masterly infidel undertaken to refute Grotius, or Lardner, or Leslie, or Doddridge, or Paley, or Watson, instead of just repeating a few cavils and objections, which have been solved a thousand times over? But the Bible is full of God. I take up this book and read; and I there find an infinite adaptation to my state as a sinner. If I am a wanderer, here is a guide: if I am enslaved, here is redemption: if I am all guilt and weakness, here is righteousness and strength. I take up the book and read, and I immediately perceive that it must have been written by a Being who knew me, and knew me perfectly; and by a Being who was concerned, and perfectly concerned for my welfare; that is the Blessed God. I take up the book and read, and I say, Such heavenly benevolence, and such pure morality, could not flow but from the fountain of all purity and benevolence. I take up the book and read, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; and the greatest of

these is charity :” “ By love serve one another.” “ Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.” And I say, What compared with these was pagan antiquity, and what compared with these is modern infidelity ? Why Hume himself, when he was asked whether it was better for the common people to reject the Scriptures or to believe in them, immediately replied, “ Why to believe in them.” And infidels have made such concessions and acknowledgements, as that hereafter, out of their own mouth they will be condemned. I could trust a child with this argument, if he was capable of understanding the subject : I would say to him, “ Read our Saviour’s sermon on the Mount :” and then I would say, “ Come my little man, tell me now, do you imagine, that people, that parents and children, that masters and servants, that the rich and the poor, that husbands and wives, would be the better or the worse by following these instructions and admonitions ?” Such a child must perceive, that a peaceable man is a far better man than one who sows discord and strife among brethren ; that a man of a gentle, tender disposition is far more loved and far more regarded than a man filled with fierceness, and passion, and envy. Only prove to me that the Bible is desirable, useful, necessary to man ; that this alone can rescue him from floundering in the mud and mire of uncertainty, and set his feet upon a rock, and establish his goings ; that this alone can free his mind from the most stinging doubts and tormenting fears ; that without this all is confusion without him, and all is dark within him ; and that this alone can sanctify him in prosperity, sustain him in adversity, and enable him to triumph in death : and I cannot question, without one external argument, I cannot question for a moment but that this is His word which cometh out of his own mouth.

We apprehend, in the second place, that Isaiah means to trace the resemblance between these natural and spiritual influences in **THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR PRODUCE**. They both yield provision for provision and propagation—seed for the sower, and bread for the eater. What would our world be without the snow and the rain from heaven ? If God was to make the heavens over us to be brass, the earth would soon beneath us be iron. So dependant are we and all classes of creatures upon the growth of the soil, that a failure here would soon renew the complaint of the prophet : “ The field is wasted, the land mourneth ; for the corn is wasted ; the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen ; howl, O ye vine-dressers, for the wheat and for the barley ; because the harvest of the field is perished. The vine is dried up, and the fig-tree languisheth ; the pomegranate-tree, the palm-tree also, and the apple-tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered : because joy is withered away from the sons of men.”

But now, see the consequence of these influences ; how his paths drop fatness ; how the valleys are made to stand thick with corn, and the little hills rejoice on every side ! And observe how, when these come down, the earth brings forth and buds, and “ gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater ;” that is, furnishes both for present and for future use : for if all were immediately consumed, what would become of those who live after us ? But here the providence of God appears in the preparation that is made for present provision and for

future propagation. Here we must lead you back to the beginning of the world, and remind you of the language of Moses, in the first chapter of the book of Genesis, when he says, "God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good." And nothing has been created since. The first man and woman included in them all the human race: the first birds, and the first beasts, comprehend all those various classes which have lived since: and the same may be said of the plants, and herbs, and corn.

Now let us see how easily this may be applied to another and a more important subject. Let us ask what would this world be without the Gospel? What would any country, any town, any village, any individual, be without the knowledge of it? Why, ready to perish; why, in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death. But when the Gospel comes, it brings relief to man: it brings along with it the staff of bread, the staff of life—of life spiritual and eternal. In other words, it brings pardon; friendship with God; the renovation of our natures; all "the fruits of the Spirit," which are "joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

And as the husbandman is a sower as well as an eater, so is the Christian. He enjoys the blessings of the Gospel himself; but then he is to convey them to others: and the Gospel has been preserved and maintained in our world in the same way with the corn—not by miracle, but by propagation. And in two ways the Gospel provides for its own propagation. The one is, by making it the *duty* of all those who have received it to extend and diffuse it: and the other is, by making it a *privilege* to do it. And it does this by producing in them a disposition for it; so that their duty becomes their delight. Drop now a single corn in the ground, and it will yield a number of corns: sow these in the ground, and they will produce many more: repeat the operation, and in time, from one single corn you will have a sufficiency with which to disseminate a furlong, a field, a district, a province, a country; yea, and the globe itself. Once all Christianity was centred in Christ: he imparted it to twelve apostles; and then to seventy disciples; and they to thousands more. Says God, "I will sow them" (speaking of his people) "in the earth:" that is, they shall produce their like—they shall multiply: "I will cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." "I will bless them, and make them a blessing."

Now let us suppose other cases. And here we will not only, or principally, confine the exemplification to ministers (God bless them! some of them are the means of turning many to righteousness, and will shine hereafter as stars in the firmament:) but I often think, that no Christian goes to heaven alone: that all the subjects of divine grace, as they wish to be useful, and endeavour to be useful, so they are *made* useful. God indulges them; they are made useful by their prayers, by their example, their influences, and their exertions. Thus it was with David: David said, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy way; and sinners shall be converted unto thee." But *he* was a musician; *he* was a poet;



he was a monarch; he had resources—large resources: *he could* serve his generation, according to the will of God. And so can *you*, if you are willing and disposed. And as water is to be found in any place, if men will dig long enough and deep enough, so there is no situation, however inconsiderable and obscure, but contains in it efficiencies, if we will employ them. A brother may bring a brother to Christ, as Andrew brought Peter. A friend may bring a friend to Christ, as Philip brought Nathaniel. A neighbour may bring his neighbour to Christ, as the woman of Sychar did the Samaritans. And masters may instruct and convert their servants: and O, I have met with more servants than one, who have said, “Blessed be God that ever I entered such a family. I was then as ignorant as a heathen; there my feet were turned into the paths of peace.” And what a revolution was produced in the family of Naaman, and in all Syria, by a little girl, that was taken captive in war; prattling as she was dressing her mistress’s hair, about the prophet of God in Israel.

One day, in my travels, I heard of a servant who had attended a Wesleyan chapel. This offended her master and mistress, who told her that she must discontinue the practice, or leave their service. She received the information with modesty, and, said she was sorry, but so it must be: she could not sacrifice the convictions of her conscience to keep her place. So they gave her warning: and she was now determined, if possible, to be more circumspect and exemplary than ever; determined, that if she suffered for her religion, her religion should not suffer for her. Some time after this, the master said to the mistress, “Why this is rather a hard measure with regard to our servant: has she not a right to worship God where she pleases as well as ourselves?” O yes,” said the mistress; “and we never had so good a servant; one who rose so early, and got her work done so well, was so clean, was so economical, never answering again.” And so they intimated that she might remain. Some time after this the mistress said—the wife said to the husband, “I think Mary’s religion does her a great deal more good than our religion seems to do us: I should like to hear her minister.” And so she went, and was impressed; and prevailed upon her husband to go, and he was impressed; and now they are all followers of God; and have the worship of God in their house.

Thus you see how the seed is furnished for the sower, as well as bread for the eater. Now a man goes, (and here, be it remembered, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen) a man goes to a neighbouring city, and is asked to hear a particular preacher: he hears, and his soul lives. He returns home with other views and feelings than those with which he went. His family first occupies and engages his attention. He is now kind to his wife; he is now tender to his children; and labours not only to be impressive, but to be inviting and alluring. But this is not all: he looks among his neighbours, and sees them destroyed for lack of knowledge; and his bowels yearn over them. He speaks to them as well as he can himself. But this is not all: he goes to the minister he heard, calls upon him, and tells him, and then weeps and weeps again—that at such a time he had heard him to purpose: “But O, Sir, do consider my poor neighbours. O that you would come over and help us! You shall be welcome to my cottage; I wish it was a mansion. I know it may draw upon me reproach, but I can bear reproach for His sake now.” The minister goes, preaches, awakens attention. Some oppose; some ridicule: but others

feel the powers of the world to come. The work goes on : by and bye a place of worship is reared, and a society is formed : call it if you please, "a church;" the Scripture calls it so, though lordly priests would not. Why it is in this way that some of our most flourishing churches have been formed. Thus there is at once "seed for the sower, and bread for the eater."

But we apprehend, that the prophet, thirdly, means, to trace a resemblance between these natural and spiritual influences **IN THEIR MODE OF OPERATION.** "So shall my word be," says God. How? "As the snow cometh down, and the rain from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater : " that is it.

These natural influences, first, operate *gradually*. So do the spiritual. What a scene does winter display often, when the woods, and the hedges, and the trees, and the fields, and the gardens, are stripped of their ornaments, and look dreary, and desolate, and dead ! But the spring comes round, and fetches out the beauties and the fertility : and we go forth, and we see nature renewing the face of the earth, and making all things new. But how ? By *degrees*. We will not limit the Holy One of Israel : there must be a time when real religion begins, though there is no time when it ends. But we confess we are not fond of instantaneous work : it is commonly suspicious. Too often what comes up in a night, withers in a night. In nature, what reaches its perfection immediately ? what comes to maturity at once ? We see every thing deduced from small beginnings, and by imperceptible degrees advancing. So it is in spiritual things. And you observe, too, that the more excellent things are, the slower is their progress. How much sooner an animal reaches its size than a man ; and how much more rapidly grows the osier than the oak. There are many eminent Christians and ministers who for some years were very feeble in their views and dispositions : it was a considerable time before they came into "the glorious liberty of the sons of God : " they had to *feel*, and they had to *fight* their way too. But they trod the firmer, because they could say, "We have learned by experience : " We know that this was the mode with our dear Saviour in the days of his flesh : he said to his disciples, "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now : "—thus he leads them on. So he does us : often he sets us off, like the dawn, with a few rays : but then these rays are forerunners ; and "the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Never, therefore, despise the day of small things. Be not discouraged if at present you have but a little strength. How small is the germ of the corn, at first ; how unlikely it seems to be able to withstand the assailing of the weather and of the winter : but that which is sown in weakness is raised in power. Let me say to every Christian here this morning, Though thy beginning be small, thy latter end shall greatly increase.

These natural influences operate, secondly, *mysteriously*. So do the spiritual. What do people mean, when they say, that they will believe no more than they can comprehend ? They must have either very large understandings, or very little creeds : for what *do* we comprehend ? Do we understand even ourselves ? "O, what a miracle," says Young, "is man to man !" Who can ex-

plain in the human frame, the causes of the vital heat, or the colour of the blood, and a thousand other things? But what do we in cases like this? We are satisfied with the results, if we are ignorant of the processes: we are satisfied of the effect, though reason may fail, and perfectly fail, as to the causation, and the mode of the causation. "As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all." "The wind," says our Saviour, "bloweth where it listeth:" and what philosopher can explain the first rise and final issue of numberless other things pertaining to it? Yet "thou hearest the sound thereof," and you feel its currents; you see the clouds course along, you see the corn wave, you see the tree upturned by the roots—"thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the spirit." Or to apply it more immediately to the imagery in our text; our Saviour said, "Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like the corn which when sown, a man goeth his way, and it springs up, he knoweth not how: for the earth bringeth forth fruit of itself; first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear." In vain, therefore, as Paul says, in vain do any ask, "How are the dead raised? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain." Here you see life and death; you see decay and growth, at once equally inexplicable and undeniable.

Thirdly, these natural influences operate *according to the soil*. So do the spiritual. In the parable, you observe, there was the very same sower, the very same seed, and the very same season: the difference, therefore, in the result was not here. Where was it then? Why it was in the nature of the ground: there were four kinds of ground—there was the way-worn, and the stony place, and the thorny place, and the good ground. Our Saviour says, the good ground is the honest and good heart. Not that any hearts are naturally so, or abstracted from the grace of God: but some are prepared for the reception of the word. Whence this preparation comes, and how it is obtained is another question; but that question is not this morning in court. The parable takes the fact as it is, and wisely accounts for the difference of the produce from the difference of the soil. "Do not," says God, "my words do good to them that walk uprightly?" That is, to those who are sincerely desirous of knowing and following its designs. Does not our Saviour say, he that will do his will, "shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself?"

The case is this: persons are never likely to do justice to what censures and condemns them. Though the will naturally and morally follows the understanding, (this is unquestionable) yet the understanding may be diverted, may be bribed. And this will always be the case where there are strong prejudices: and there are no prejudices so strong as those which belong to the love of the world and the love of sin. And therefore how many are there who oppose the Bible because they have so lived as to make it their enemy; and then they say, "I hate it, because it does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." "Therefore," says the Apostle James, "lay apart all filthiness,

and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." O then you are likely to derive benefit from reading or hearing the word when you are delivered from the love of every sin. and when you can come to his dear feet, and pray, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Lead me in thy way; and guide me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day."

Agencies must evermore operate according to the nature of their subjects. Heat, the very same heat, that melts the wax, will harden the clay. Dress a living and a dead man in the same clothes; and one will be warm, the other will be cold: the raiment is the very same, the flesh is not. Take two persons sitting in the same pew, and hearing the same truth; if the one of them believe it, and believe not only the truth of it, but the importance, and the other does not—is it possible for these two to feel alike the very same doctrine? No; what says the apostle to the Hebrews? "The word preached did not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." What says he to the Thessalonians? "Ye received our word, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe."

Lastly, these natural influences operate in *connexion with human means and exertions*. So do the spiritual. The husbandman knows that he cannot produce an ear of corn: but he equally knows that he can manure, and plough, and sow: and he knows that he should be a fool to look for a crop without these. For though he well knows that God could produce a crop without him, he knows that he never does; and he knows that though these would be all nothing without the snow and the rain from heaven, he equally knows that the rain and the snow from heaven would be nothing without these. The one in the economy of God is as necessary as the other. Why should you be shocked at this? Instrumentality never excludes agency; never detracts from it; yea, displays it the more. And therefore you ministers study hard; and seek to find out, not only words of truth, but acceptable words; and then retire and pray, "O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity." Don't you parents talk like some foolish parents, "We cannot make Christians; we cannot convert our children;" but "train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and when they are old they will not depart from it;" and each of you be induced to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God "who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

"For all these things," says God, after promising them, "will I be inquired of them by the house of Israel to do it for them." Here indeed now is some difference between these natural and these spiritual influences;" but then it is in our favour. We are not sure that our prayers will always move the clouds: but we know who has said here, "Ask, and it shall be given; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened." We know who has said, "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." The fertility produced by these influences in the fields and in the gardens is always *limited*: but there are no bounds to control the spiritual progress; God giveth "more grace: he is "the God of all grace:" you may "go on unto perfection;" you may "increase with all increase of God," and be "filled with all the fulness of God."



Lastly, we apprehend Isaiah means to trace the resemblance between these natural and spiritual influences **IN THE CERTAINTY OF THEIR SUCCESS.** This seems to be his principal, though not his only aim. The snow and the rain, says he, which came down from heaven, returned not thither: that is, they do not return there fruitless. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it:" that is, neither of them is ineffectual according to a certain order; some result always follows.

Now, how is this? How is this with regard to the snow and the rain? Are they *always* useful? It is easy to see that when they fall upon the garden and upon the field they are useful: but where is their use when they fall upon the sea, and upon the sand, and upon the rock? And yet would you dare to say that they were useless there? Could you say that God poured them down in vain there? Is it for you, mere short-sighted creatures, to determine what is in vain in the divine empire, where you often find one operation will produce a thousand effects. It is a fact, that God sends the Gospel, and that it is fairly and faithfully preached often where persons do not receive it at first. Is it then *thrown away*? Even with regard to the *wicked* it is not in vain: they shall know that a prophet has been among them; they shall have "no cloak for their sins;" they shall be speechless; they shall feel the full conviction that their destruction has been from themselves; or, if they say any thing, they will acknowledge that He is "justified when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth."

Besides, man is to be considered not only *personally* but *relatively*. Where the Gospel does not *sanctify*, it *restrains*; where it does not *save*, it *civilizes*. The community derives a thousand benefits from the general influence of the Gospel: and if we had time we could exemplify this in many instances with regard to charitable institutions, with regard to slavery, with regard to war, with regard to marriage, with regard to the tone of morals among the lower orders of the people. But there is a certainty of some spiritual effects in this case also. The degree of usefulness here, and the instances of usefulness here, we are incompetent judges of. The person to whom the minister has been useful, perhaps is a traveller; he goes on his way immediately, and he never sees him more. The person, perhaps, is soon after removed to a distant residence; the minister never sees him again; the man, perhaps, never comes forward to make the acknowledgement; he is afraid that he has not really "the root of the matter" in him.

Then here is another view to be taken of the thing. The Apostle, you see, in his epistle to the Philippians considers *the day of Christ* as the period of ministerial rejoicing: "That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." Ah! my brethren, in the ministry, you may then rejoice: you can then depend upon the *effects*; the fruit remains, and will remain for ever. And you also, then, are prepared to receive *the knowledge* of it. It would *endanger* you now: you will then be disposed, and be able, to ascribe the whole undividedly to the Lord, who worketh all in all. Who, but God, can tell what good has been done by a minister of long life and consistent character? But would it be safe for him to be entrusted with the knowledge of

this now? He should know *something* of it; he will know something of it: he will know enough now to encourage him to go forward: and there is enough to encourage him, if he has been the means of the conversion of only one sinner's soul from the error of his ways, and to create joy in the presence of the angels of God. But who can tell the good that is done by a single sermon in a large audience, while the effect moves about like an invisible spirit from heart to heart? What conviction does it produce: what emotions does it excite? And then these convictions and emotions are carried away, and persons exemplify them in relative and in common life. O, could we witness what has taken place under the preaching of a Gospel sermon, as God surveys it! There we should find one pricked in the heart, crying out, "What must I do to be saved?" There another is freed from his doubts and fears, and enabled to rejoice in the God of his salvation. Another comes in pressed down with grief to the ground; and the preacher has the tongue of the learned, and speaks a word in season to him as the weary heart knows its own bitterness: but under these feelings the Christian comes in, and finds God in his palace for a refuge. A poor widow comes in, and sits down on a form under the gallery; and pulls to her knee her fatherless boy, and sighs. Let her alone, for her soul is troubled and vexed within her: but she soon begins to wipe away her tears with the corner of her apron: for she hears the minister say, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them; and let thy widows trust in me." "The Father of the fatherless, and the Husband of the widow, is God in his holy habitation."

I must think of drawing towards a close.

And now, in the first place, *God forbid that ever you should go away from this place, or any other place, supposing that you go away the same that you entered.* Be assured that the Gospel upon which you attend is one of those agencies that will operate in some way or other; that it is a medicine that will hurt or heal, kill or cure. Every time you withdraw from hearing the Gospel, you are less susceptible, or more, of spiritual and heavenly impressions; you are more or less fitted for heaven or hell. Who believes this—who ever thinks of this, as he ought? If you saw the sun shining upon the land of your neighbours, and a dark, dense cloud always hanging over yours; if you saw the rain coming down upon the fields and gardens of some others, while yours remained dried up and parched; would you not be uneasy? would you not be alarmed? would you not say, "Tell me—O tell me what is the cause that these influences are withholden from me? Why should I be made a spectacle of the divine displeasure to all around?" How is it that you do not realize this in another and a more important cause? When you see others affected under the Word, and *you* are insensible: when others join the church, and *you* keep back. Perhaps the servant joins the church, and you, the master, keep back. Perhaps the wife joins the church, and you, the husband, keep back. Perhaps on the Sabbath-day morning of the sacrament, when you go down the aisle, you father, you mother, look back and see your dear child remain at the table of the Lord, while you are withdrawing: how can you bear this?

A minister in the country, not very far off now, had one day called upon him two sisters in early life, who proposed themselves as candidates for communion. It was necessary to make enquiries concerning them: and, as we remember the remark of old Philip Henry, that "men are in religion *really*

what they are *relatively*”—he called upon the mother. The mother had buried the pious husband some years before, but had remained undecided herself. She bore an excellent testimony to her daughters, and said, “If they do not go to heaven, I know not whoever will:” and then rising up from the chair, and, wringing her hands as she walked up and down the room, she exclaimed, “Lord, what will become of me! My husband is gone to heaven; and now my daughters are going: and am I to be left a poor spiritual outcast. O, Sir! pray for me, that the God of my husband, and the God of my children may be my God.” He perceived the impression that was made, and cherished it: and some time after came forward the mother and the daughters together; and a brave weeping-time they all had.

Well, but this subject affords *encouragement to God's servants*. They should remember that they do not labour at random, or at an uncertainty; the Lord assigns them their place, and their work, and their ability, and the nature and the degree of their usefulness. My dear brethren in the ministry, allow me to recommend you always to look at our text before you leave your study. Allow me to say, Always look at this text, and think of it the last thing in the pulpit when you are just rising up to preach: “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” Ministers have trials—many more than some of you are aware of. They have trials in common with you as *men*; and they have trials in common with you as *Christians*: but in addition to these two huge multitudes, they have trials peculiar also to themselves: but “*they live if you stand fast in the Lord.*” It is enough under all they endure if the work of the Lord prospers; if souls are added to the Lord daily of such as shall be saved; and the conversation of Christians is such as becometh the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yea, they know too, that, if Israel be but gathered, they shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord: and thus they shall stand faithful. They know that they are a sweet savour unto God, both in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one indeed they are “the savour of life unto life:” but to the other they are “the savour of death unto death.” There is, however—I am sure I speak the feelings of my brethren here—there is another and a better comfort they have than this; and that is, the hope that they shall save, not only themselves, but also them that hear them.

Well this encouragement of course extends to *all missionary efforts*. To think of evangelizing the whole world is a bold and daring enterprize. It certainly is a very important and a very necessary one, if we believe our own principles, if we believe the testimony of God concerning the state of those who are destitute of the Gospel, and the mode by which they are to be recovered. But why should it be thought an impracticable one? Has not God foretold it, and promised it? It will be needless now, and we have not time, to repeat the number of passages of Scripture, which, blessed be God, on these occasions are now become very well known and familiar. But when we read such declarations as these: “He shall sprinkle many nations”—“All nations shall fall down before him, and all kings shall serve him”—“The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea”—and so on: allow me to ask, whether any thing has yet occurred in the history of divine Providence

or grace, sufficient to embody these assurances? If not, whatever be the croakings and the forebodings of some, better days are before us than the world has ever yet witnessed.

And has not God also commanded this? Has he not said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature?" And would he enjoin what is an absolute impossibility? Has not much been done already in this cause? How unlikely when the law went out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, how unlikely was the rapid establishment and spread of Christianity which followed. "But," say some, "there were miracles then." There were; and miracles have now ceased; and we are not to look for miracles now. But, then, neither do we need them. How was this highly-favoured country evangelized at first? Not by miracle. How have the South Sea Islands been evangelized? Not by miracles: no, but by the blessing of God on the use of means. Why then, should not this cause become general? Why should it not become universal? What is there in any case to be overcome that has not been overcome in various instances already, by the blessing of God upon means, inferior to those which we are in the possession of? How many things are there that may be considered as indications and pledges in this case? We cannot refer to them at all now; but it is impossible not to remark the prompt and easy mode of intercourse now between one country and another; the increase of science, and the extension of commerce. You will observe that these are almost exclusively appertaining to Christian countries. And there is one thing that exclusively belongs to them; namely, all colonization. Such is the wretched state under Mahometan and heathen governments, that there is no surplus population to be provided for. But all the colonies that have been formed for a length of time back, and are still being formed; all these are from Christian nations. And therefore they go forth with more or less of the means of grace in their possession, and the knowledge of divine truth, and maintain connexion with the mother country, from which they derive assistance.

And then what a field is there open to Protestants. There is no Popish mission now; and I am persuaded there never will be again. The field, therefore, lies open entirely to Protestants: it is occupied by them only. There yet remains very much land to be possessed: but what a spirit has God already awakened; and what efforts have been made in the translation of the Scriptures; and in sending forth missionaries. How many Missionary Societies have there been established: and all these (blessed be God) all these look to God for their efficiency and success. They are all therefore, founded on prayer; and they all carry forth, with some little shades of difference, which do not affect the essentials of Christianity, all carry out the same truth—the truth as it is in Jesus.

So far, my Christian friends, my reflections have been general, and intended to meet such an occasion as this. It is not necessary that they should be more particular: we are all here agreed; we may venture to say that the spirit of catholicism characterizes all the missionary societies, and that they rejoice in each other's success. With regard to you, my brethren, who have the honour of having gone before many others, before the Baptist Missionary Society, before the London Missionary Society, before the Scotch Missionary Society,



and before the Church of England Missionary Society; indeed *they* were the last to bring the king back; but now they are nobly exerting themselves. Blessed be God for what success has attended you. If you had failed in these efforts, the failure would have been more glorious than success in any other cause under heaven. But you have not failed. What has God wrought! You do not "labour in the very fire," nor "weary yourselves for very vanity." You are on the rising side; you are on the superior side; and a side that will in time become universal also.

Why then, you say, should you exert yourselves in order to recommend it? Why because God displays his wisdom as well as his power in his operations; because he accomplishes ends by means; because, if you are in a proper frame of mind, you will long to become instrumental in his hand. If you decline the work, the work will not be declined. Be assured of this: God will raise up enlarged means from other quarters; but *you* will lose the honour and the happiness of co-operation. Yea, not only so, but you will incur guilt, and you will expose yourselves to the curse of the angel for disobedience, for the neglect of opportunities and means: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

But my Wesleyan brethren, I would not conclude with a curse. "The Lord bless you, and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace." Amen and Amen.

## THE EXAMPLE OF ANDREW.

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REV. J. ANDERSON, A.M.

ST. PANCRAS' CHURCH, NEW ROAD, APRIL 26, 1835\*.

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"He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus."—JOHN, i. 41, 42.

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THE scene which is presented to us in this passage of Scripture, presents one of those beautiful pictures of simplicity, and purity, and love, which are so often revealed to us in the pages of the Inspired Volume. There is no elaborate display about them: there is no effort to adorn the prominent figures with any high-wrought colouring; or to contrast them with any artificial grouping of the objects around them. They are simple and faithful representations of human nature, awakened and purified by the Spirit of faith and of holiness.

We see this evidently in the case before us. The Baptist, if we examine the context, had been delivering, with zeal and earnestness, the message with which he was intrusted. He had been heard crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord." He had rebuked the impenitent, awakened the slothful, and taught the ignorant. He had spoken no smooth things, nor prophesied deceits; but had told the people plainly of the coming terrors of the Lord. He had told them of the axe that was lifted up to strike the barren tree to the dust; and of the fire that was ready to devour each unprofitable branch. He had given them, moreover, the baptism of water unto repentance; and had told them even of One mightier than himself, who should come, whose shoes he was not worthy to loose. "He was not that light," he told the people; he was only sent to bear witness of it: and he bore that witness faithfully and truly. Yea, he beheld the Lord, of whom he spake, coming even to the waters of his own baptism: for thus did it become that blessed Redeemer to fulfil all righteousness. He saw the heavens then opened, and the Holy Ghost then descending, and the voice of the Eternal Father then declaring, that that was his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. But even further than this was the Baptist commissioned to preach him: for he was enabled to point to Christ as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world;" that Lamb "without blemish and without spot," by whom a way hath been consecrated for us into the holiest of holies; by whom the means of reconciliation with a Heavenly Father is vouchsafed to an offended world.

These things, we remember, formed the subject of the Baptist's ministry. And these things we find that certain inhabitants of Bethsaida heard; for they were John's disciples: and by the testimony which they had heard they believed. We are told that they followed Jesus; that they "saw where he dwelt,

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\* For the District National Schools.

and abode with him that day; for it was about the tenth hour." We know not, my brethren, what was the subject of the holy converse then vouchsafed to these first followers of Christ, for the Scripture has not revealed it: but assuredly, if ever the affections of our common nature were turned to grace; if ever the outward senses, or the inward feelings, of our nature were attuned to heavenly peace and harmony, that must have been when these humble Galileans were admitted to the abode, and beheld the glory, of the Son of God. We know, in fact, that their minds were enlightened, and their affections purified, by the privileges to which they were admitted; for the language of Andrew, in the text, proves his knowledge of the truth. He had been the disciple of John, but was now taught of Christ: he had followed the servant, but now did homage to the Lord: he had obeyed the messenger, but now he saw that King of Glory, of whom that messenger was the forerunner. His heart, then, was lifted up from the depths of sin; the high places of pride were brought down within him: the crooked paths of worldly policy were exchanged for the simplicity of truth; and the wretched contentions of worldly strife for meekness and order.

These, then, were the blessings vouchsafed to Andrew when he became the Lord's apostle; and these were the blessings which in all earnestness and faith he sought to make his own brother partaker of. Mark, how quickly and powerfully the spirit and the principle of faith brought forth its fruits. "He first findeth," we are told, "his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus." Observe: he brought that brother to whom he revealed that blessed truth to the fountain of that very truth. That Jesus was "the Christ;" that Saviour was become to him "the Anointed One;" the Priest to make atonement; the Prophet to instruct; the King to rule. He of whom the prophets had spoken was that very Jesus. Yes, he was "the seed of the woman;" "the child" of Abraham's promise; "the prophet" that should arise up "like unto Moses." It was He of whose coming Balaam spoke, when he beheld "the star" which should "arise out of Jacob." It was He of whose coming Isaiah spoke, when he spake of "the names whereby he should be called"—"The Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." It was "the desire of all nations;" it was "the Lord our Righteousness;" it was "the seed of David;" that "stem" to which "the Gentiles should look," and whose "rest should be glorious;" it was that blessed "angel of the covenant;" it was, in fact, the full consummation of all those blessed promises, which, from the day of Adam's fall, had been vouchsafed to man, to be his guide, his support, and his consolation. All this was now fulfilled; and all this Andrew, in the fulness of his affection, made known to his brother.

And in contemplating his zeal and eagerness to convey that truth, I know not what more touching picture can be presented to us of fraternal love, purified and exalted by the love of Christ. Observe, it is not only the love which we are permitted to feel, and which we rejoice to feel, for those who are born with us of the same parents, who dwell with us under the same roof, who have shared the hopes and the fears of our childish days, and who still walk by our side along the path of life; but it was that enduring bond of brotherhood which shall remain when earthly kindred and earthly affections have crumbled into dust; it is that bond which unites the things which are temporal with the things

that are eternal ; which imparts a sacredness, even to worldly affections ; and makes them a means of grace, a pledge of heavenly comfort.

But it is needless longer to dwell on that point ; for I feel that your own thoughts must far outrun my words. You must feel that, to be possessed in your own persons of the knowledge of God through Christ, and then to be permitted to hold up the light of that same blessing to those whom you loved in this world—you must feel that to be a blessing, in comparison with which all the poor hopes of this life sink into very nothingness.

Now, if this be so with reference to those who are of the same household with ourselves, who are partakers of the same daily bread with ourselves ; I would ask you, Does not the same principle exist in kind, though it may differ in degree, with all who are in any way brought within the reach of our influence ? The Gospel which we profess to receive teaches us to despise no man ; yea, it teaches us to “ honour all men.” It confines not the friendship of our neighbours within any of those arbitrary sections to which human theorists would confine us : but it expressly tells us, that, whatever may be the differences, whatever the gradations which mark our earthly path, it tells us, nevertheless, that “ as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office ; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

Bearing this great principle, then, in mind, you will find that to bear the message of Christian truth to the hearts and the consciences of all with whom you are brought in contact, is not only a duty to which you are bound, but a privilege in which you ought to rejoice. And if you perceive that, then you will acknowledge as its necessary consequence, that the object for which I am this day directed to ask your support, is at once a legitimate object of appeal from the Christian minister to a Christian people. For what is it we are commanded to ask ? Is it not that you should give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, by pointing to that glorious day-spring from on high which hath visited us ? For what is it but to lift up the soul which is weighed down by the cares and sorrows of life, and make it lean upon the sure hope of that Redeemer, who is “ the father of the fatherless, and the husband of the widow ? Is it not to assure the poor that they are blessed, for that theirs is the kingdom of heaven ? Is it not to assure the meek in heart, that they are blessed, for that they shall inherit the earth ? Is it not, in short, to instruct your poor and suffering brethren—those who were created by the same Almighty hand that created you—those who are journeying by your side along the path of life—who, like you, are candidates for the same everlasting inheritance, through the merits of the same Redeemer ? Is it not to instruct them in the reading of that glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which is not after man, neither is received of man, neither was any man taught it but by the revelation of Christ ? It is, in fact, to embody in the hearts of each one present, and to shew forth in the acts of each one present, the same holy and glorious love, which prompted the Galilean apostle, first to find his own brother Simon ; then to declare to him the blessings which had fallen on his own path ; and lastly, to bring them to the full enjoyment of that Saviour.

More than this—the extension of Christian truth to those who might not otherwise hear it—more than this is not required ; nor indeed can much more be done than to give that instruction in the doctrines and duties of our religion,



to which a claim of common right, we maintain, is in some sort constituted in a Christian country, by the very capacity which there exists in its inhabitants to profit by it. Of knowledge in general, I believe the observation to be a just one, that there are branches of it which it would be preposterous in the mass of mankind to attempt to acquire, because they have no immediate connexion with their respective duties, and because they demand talents which nature possibly has not given, and opportunities which Providence has withheld. But with respect to the primary truths of the Gospel the case is widely different: they are of such daily, such actual necessity, that they form, not the luxury of the mind, but the positive needful sustenance of the soul itself. "This is life eternal," saith the Saviour, "to know Thee, the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

Upon what ground, then, does that objection rest, which pretends to foresee, that, by the advantages of such an education, the poor man may be raised above the laborious duties of his station, and thus his usefulness in civil society may be impaired? It is not easy to conceive, in what manner instructing men in their duties can prompt them to neglect those duties—or how that enlargement of reason, which enables them to comprehend the true ground of authority, and obligation of obedience, should dispose them to disobey it. The admirable mechanism of society, together with the subordination of ranks which is essential in society, is surely not an elaborate imposture which the exercise of reason would detect and would expose. I can perfectly understand that such an objection may have force in the case of tyrannical and unlawful governments; the support of which is fear, and to which ignorance is as congenial as it is abhorrent to the spirit of a free nation. I can understand it also to have force in the obedience of papal authority; where ignorance gives a support to prejudice and perpetuity to error. But in a country like our own, in which the meanest peasant has birth-rights, unless they are forfeited to public justice—I say the objection implies a reflection upon the social order, equally impolitic, invidious, and unjust. We are never to forget, that the mass of the people forms the broad basis of that pyramid of our civil and ecclesiastical constitution of which we are a part; and that it is therefore essentially necessary, that the foundation of that vast fabric be made firm and secure, and be well compacted by the sound principles of Christian truths, which are the chief support of national happiness and prosperity. That foundation, I say, must be laid broad, and surely the elaborate ornament would be but a wretched compensation for that solidity that is required in the foundation of the building. Be assured it is not because the people know *too much* that they are become, or are likely to become, the willing subjects of the factions or the unprincipled demagogue: it is just because they know *too little*: it is because ignorance is the field in which the political impostor reaps his most abundant harvest; it is in ignorance that he finds the most powerful instrument to work, and to carry forward his evil designs. Therefore it is this, so congenial to our nature—this very ignorance, this indolence, this unwillingness to be instructed—I say it is this which continues still upon the hearts of the people, notwithstanding the vast and gigantic efforts that have been made for many years to remove it. The records of crime in this land are sufficient evidence to shew how large a proportion there is to be found amongst those who crowd our jails in the towns and in the country, who are still plunged in the darkness of most fearful ignorance.

In urging, therefore, renewed efforts to remove that evil, I urge not the mere education of letters, as a thing to lay stress upon for its own sake, so much as the education of principle. I agree with those who profess that they have no faith in the efficacy of Mechanics' Institutes alone, or even of primary and elementary schools alone, for building up a virtuous and well-conditioned peasantry. There must be also the lessons of piety; and in the absence of those lessons, they can no more perform the functions of training a people in real morality, than skeletons can perform the functions of living men.

The self-called liberalism of the day, or the pride of lettered wisdom, may undervalue and may deride this assertion; but still I repeat it, that it is with the Christianity of our towns and our villages, that this country must stand or fall. I grant that the force of inward integrity may still do what it did in the days of pagan Italy and Greece. Some master spirit may arise among us, as it arose among them, whose name shall still live in the hearts of future generations. But we may be assured, that it is the power of God, and the power of godliness alone, that can reclaim our population in the length and in the breadth of it. It is that power alone which can shed a moral bloom, and a moral fragrance, over the wide expanse of society. It is only by this, I believe, that we can withstand the assaults of infidelity amongst our fellow-countrymen.

It is no argument against it to say, that these alleged objects sometimes appear to fail: it is no fair argument against it to say that these proposed effects are oftentimes not manifested: for what system is there to which imperfection does not cling? And what system is there, which, however apparently perfect in itself, may not be marred by the indifference of its teachers? Observe, we are not to form our opinions upon its merits, upon any partial, upon any insulated cases, that may fall within the sphere of our own knowledge. Those cases may, perhaps, make a strong impression on our minds, and may tend to warp and pervert our judgment. But we ought to guard against that partial judgment: we ought to take into our account the whole of what it has done and is doing. Therefore we are not to be limited or restrained in our course of Christian generosity, upon any impartial, upon any fictitious or supposed error that has fallen under our own notice.

Neither is it any fair argument to urge, that the individual exertion of any one present is small, and therefore useless: for it is one of the many advantages possessed by institutions of this kind, that while the efforts of the individual are, and must be partial, are likely to be abortive, and oftentimes mistaken, if you carry out that same idea in support of such societies, the strength of the aggregate becomes the strength of each individual who supports it; and you feel that you are casting your bread upon the waters, not to be swallowed up, but to be found again after many days. You feel that every offering that you make, is given thankfully in the spirit of faith, in the spirit of that eager anxiety that prompted Andrew to come, and bring his brother Simon to the knowledge of Christ; you feel that all Christians who are linked with you in the same work are strengthening your hands, and you strengthening theirs. You feel that as you have one hope, one calling, having one Lord, one faith, one baptism; so are your souls working out the work of that blessed Saviour by one and the same means of union. You feel that you are working out that, not in your own strength, not in your own wisdom, but by a humble, cordial, earnest co-operation with those who wish well to our Zion, who pray for the peace of our Jerusalem.

And if you look upon that mass of population that surrounds you; if you take into your view the efforts there made by the great powers of evil to pervert and poison that mass; if you look to the temptations which this city holds out daily and hourly to the infant mind; if you look forward to the danger that there is among the people, of their giving way to those temptations, of their falling into those snares; if you look to the catalogue of crimes, and see what shame, what reproach they cast on a Christian land; and then feel, that in institutions like this, you are doing what in you lies to diminish that burden, to introduce light and health into that mass which would otherwise be poisoned and dead: you surely then will not go forward in the work with any spirit of niggardly or of selfish feeling. And more than this, you will feel, that at no time can you be absolved from carrying on that work: for just as you have heard, in the morning lesson, of the plague that went through Israel's people on account of Israel's sins; so you will remember that the sins committed by God's people in our own day, produce among them, it may be, not always the physical plague, of consuming sickness; but it produces that which is more consuming still—a *moral* pestilence; it produces a morbid corruption of the heart, that makes both soul and body ruined in God's sight for ever. Therefore, to stay that moral pestilence must be the work of the Christian here, just as in the former case, we know that nothing stayed that plague but the intercession of the great High Priest; we know that it was he who put in incense, and made atonement for the sins of the people; that it was he who stood between the dead and the living; and that it was he who thus stayed the plague. And from him, whose heart is not carried on to the contemplation of the greater than Aaron, to that "great High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec," who stood, and still stands, between the dead and the living, to make intercession for us at the throne of God; he having put on incense—not the perfumes of moral or of human intercession, but having put on the incense of his all-atoning merits; by these did he once make atonement on Calvary for the sins of the whole world; by these does he still plead for his people at the throne of grace; and by these are you invited to draw near, with a full heart, and in full assurance "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need."

The same intercession, then, would we implore, when we seek to stay the moral pestilence; and we feel that we are staying it, if we carry out into the infected mass the knowledge of Christian love. We know we are staying it, if we shed over that rude chaos of sin the Spirit of Christ. We know that as the Spirit of Christ brought light, and order, and loveliness into the first creation, so will the spirit of his life, if shed abroad in the heart, bring there love, and joy, and holiness.

It is, therefore, that work to which we are summoned; it is that duty to which we are bound; it is that work of mercy at which we should rejoice. That work, then, my brethren, is yours this day. I ask you to join in it, because I feel that the hands of those who now support it, faithfully and truly, need your help to the very uttermost. I ask it earnestly, therefore, feeling that the Christian heart will feel, and the Christian hand will give. I ask it, not for the sake of earthly wisdom or earthly pride, but I ask it in the name of Christ, and for the sake of Christ. I ask Christian men to fulfil the Christian law of Christian disciples—to bring their poor brethren to the knowledge of that same Christ, to the glory of that same Redeemer.

## CHRIST'S AGONY AND BLOODY SWEAT IN THE GARDEN.

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REV. J. RUDGE, D.D.

HAWKCHURCH, PALM-SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 1835.

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"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.—LUKE, xxii. 44.

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WERE I to represent to you, my friends, any real case of individual distress, or were I to describe even any afflicting scene of fictitious suffering, there are few amongst you whose sensibility would not be excited, either by the simple detail of the one, or the highly-wrought picture of the other. It is admitted on all hands, whatever differences of opinion exist as to the causes in which it has originated (and it is out of my province to hazard a judgment on such subjects), that the present times are pregnant with great and overwhelming distress, and that they afford instances without number of persons who are reduced from comparative affluence and comfort to a state of beggary and ruin. I might select one of these hapless instances. I might ask you to view a father, with whom domestic peace and competency were once familiar, now plunged into the lowest abyss of deprivation and want, and destitute even of the commonest conveniences and supports of human existence. I might, and without any violation of truth, represent his wife and children looking up to him for that support, and crying to him for that bread, of which he has no longer the means of extending the one, and supplying the other. He is penniless—he is powerless. Ah! where is the heart that *would* not melt—that *does* not melt? Your very looks—your very silence prove at least that your hearts melt at this case of paternal agony and anguish. You have tears to shed, you have sympathy to tender for the sufferings of a father. His distress is no fiction of the brain, but real and heart-rending. Now let me once more read the text to you: "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Of whom speaks the Scripture this? Who was in an agony? Some ideal character? or was it some real sufferer? Was it the man—was it the God, Christ Jesus? Then, then is the prediction of the prophet realized, and in his language, I ask ye, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. From above he hath sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them."

My brethren, from the course of the services of this day it must be sufficiently apparent what the theme is, to which your thoughts should be led, and upon which your devotions should be employed. And what is that theme? The agony



the bitter passion of Him to whom the text refers, and of whom the prophet speaks. In a word, this is the first day of the Passion Week ; and as I am one who hold in the highest reverence and esteem this ordinance of the National Church, I have felt it my duty not to let its periodical return pass without reminding you of it from the pulpit, and offering such an address as is appropriate to a season so solemn, and to a week so holy. How do you mean to employ it? As much, permit me to express the hope, in religious duties as possible. Business must have its claims upon you, I admit; but pleasure none. Give then to God as much of your time as practicable. Make some little sacrifice; and believe me, if there be a *will*, there will be found a *way*, ever among those who are the most engaged and immersed in this world's pursuits and business, of abstracting the mind from temporal things, and of employing it a little in heavenly ones. Then keep holy the week, by attending the morning prayers of the Church, and keep the fast. Is the sacrament to be administered? Receive it; and let a "Thus saith the Lord," banish scruple, and dissipate prejudice. I am one of those who think that none can ever err by receiving the sacrament. And why? Because it is the word of Christ. "Ye are my friends, if ye do what I command you." Search the Scriptures, and obey the Lord, and not man; obey Christ, and not yourselves.

I now proceed, in the strength of my gracious Master, to open the text, and to accompany my explanation of it with such remarks as, I trust, will be improving to your views, and satisfactory to your minds.

The blessed Redeemer, having finished his intercessory prayer, came down with his disciples from the Mount of Olives into the valley below, in which was a field called Gethsemane. Through this field flowed the brook Cedron\*, on the other side of which there was a garden, commonly known by the name of the garden of Gethsemane. Into this garden our Lord entered with his followers; of whom we have reason to think, from the account of St. Mark respecting the tragical scene that was there acted, that he left most of them at the garden-door within, to watch the approach of Judas and his armed band, and that he took with him only Peter, and James, and John, who had been the witnesses of his transfiguration on Mount Tabor, to be now also the witnesses of his passion in the field of Gethsemane. Here "he began to be sore amazed, and very heavy; and said unto them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The prospect of the sufferings to which he was about to submit, was so full of horror and dismay, as to cause him to fall into a sore and a bloody agony, and in the bitterness of his soul to utter the sorrowful language of the text. Now it was that he sustained those grievous sorrows in his spirit, by which, combined with those that he endured on the cross, he suffered as a sin-offering, and thereby procured an atonement for the plague of the people, and the redemption of sinners. His unparalleled sufferings, now rushing like some overwhelming torrent upon him, he prepares to meet. And how? He fell down on his knees, and engaged in the sweet and soul-sustaining exercises of prayer and devotion. For this purpose, that, apart from men, he might hold undistracted communion with God, he had retired from his three favourite disciples; and having withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, he kneeled down

\* So called, either because cedars grew on its banks, or from *Kedar*—darkness.

and prayed, saying, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me." St. Matthew says, that "he fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." The expression of St. Mark in detailing this memorable transaction, is somewhat different. He describes him as falling on the ground, and praying that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. From these accounts, which are in substance the same, it would appear, that our Lord first kneeled and prayed; then, in the vehemence and fervour of his earnestness, he threw himself prostrate on his face, and bent his sacred body to the earth. His prayer was so vehement and fervent, that he prayed himself into an agony: yet it was accompanied with due expressions of perfect submission and resignation to his heavenly Father's pleasure: for he immediately added, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." His human nature being now burthened above measure, he found it necessary to retire, and pray to be delivered from the grievous sufferings that were then accumulating and pressing heavily upon him, and from that dreadful wrath, with which he was now so sorely amazed, and so totally overwhelmed.

And here for a moment let us pause; and without dwelling upon the passion, the sympathy, and the tears of contrition, which the sufferings of the man of sorrows should excite within us, let us reflect upon the instruction which his conduct, at this eventful period of his life, teaches. My brethren, in this life, ye shall each of you have tribulation. Like the Saviour, ye have your brook of Cedron to pass over, and in the language of the Psalmist, to "drink of the bitter waters of the brook in the way," Psalm cx. 7. Ye have your cross to bear, and your afflictions to suffer; your Red sea of difficulties to encounter, and your Jordan of trials to experience, and you must journey through the valley of Baca, ere you can arrive at the gates of Zion, and enter into the land of Canaan. And is this a true account of your present state and condition? Then assuredly it behoves you to make this world a kind of school in which your minds may be attempered and disciplined for the various trials to which you will be exposed, and the innumerable difficulties and temptations with which you will be surrounded. And if there be a spot, in which the proper temper to bear and conquer them can be taught, it is in the garden of Gethsemane. Behold your Saviour! In the hour of his trial, and in the season of his agony, his communion was with God: his comfort and his strength were in prayer. Be ye like-minded: and learn from him these improving lessons, and, in every respect, to copy his manner, when you engage in the private devotions of the closet, or in the public worship of the temple. "He kneeled down and prayed." This prostration of the body is most appropriate to the place, and most becoming the worshipper, in the presence of his God.

But waiving these considerations, its sanction and its authority is the conduct of Christ. "He prayed thrice." In other words, let your petitions be importunate: let them be repeated, not thrice only, but at every convenient opportunity of every day of your lives. Are not your hearts a temple? If a temple, surely therein religious service should be performed, and daily oblations be offered, "He prayed earnestly." You should be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." A cold and heartless formality in prayer, that will God despise. The example of Christ instructs you to be earnest in religion; and one of his servants, an apostle, tells ye that, "to be zealously affected in a holy cause," that

is "good." Whenever then ye pray, pray earnestly. Withdraw, in a spiritual sense, a stone's cast from the world; and while in prayer, let your eye be on your prayer-book, your heart be intent on your service, and your thoughts rove not from your devotions.

While I beseech you to be earnest in prayer, after the pattern of Christ, there is a caution that I would administer. Mankind—Englishmen in particular—are apt to run into extremes; the sinner of to-day to be the saint of to-morrow. Be temperate in all things; and particularly in religion; and while you avoid the heartlessness of the lukewarm, shun with equal felicity, the extravagance of the enthusiast. The earnestness of Christ was the earnestness of a pious, mild, equable, retiring, temperate, resigned spirit; like some beauteous and pellucid stream, meandering through the vale, and winding its calm but earnest course through the valley, with scarcely a ripple to disturb its beautiful surface and its serene and lovely aspect.

And Christ prayed, "Let this cup pass from me." In him, it was perfectly lawful to make this request. It displayed no insubordination of spirit, and no disloyalty of sentiment. He knew that with God all things are possible, and here was his faith, "all things are possible to thee:" if thou wilt thou canst yet make an atonement for the people, without requiring the high-priest to run into the midst of the fire, to put on the incense, and to shed his blood to appease the wrath that has gone out of the Lord, and to stay the plague that is begun among the transgressors.

And then observe his resignation, expressed in these words, which are worthy of your imitation in every hour of trial, and in every season of distress, "Not what I will, but what thou wilt!" In one of your prayers you are directed to say, "Fulfil, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants;" but, as those petitions and desires, if granted, might not be conformable to the divine will, nor conducive to your good, you add, with infinite propriety and beauty, "as may be most expedient for them;" and this qualification or reserve should always be annexed to every desire you express, and to every petition you utter. "Abba, Father," said Christ, when he knelt down and prayed. The adoption of this term evinced his dutiful regard and his filial affection. And he hath taught us, in his own inimitable prayer, thus to approach the throne, and express the title, of "our Father which is in heaven." "He was exceeding sorrowful." The state of mind and agony into which he was plunged, showed a feeling sense of the want of that for which he prayed. He indeed had no sins of his own, for which he needed to be relieved from the burthen, and be absolved from the guilt. But he bore in his own person *yours*; and he felt their weight, the gall and the wormwood thereof. And do ye wonder, that he was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death?

But why do I mention this? That, in this instance too, ye should imitate your Lord; and whenever ye approach your Father in heaven, in prayer, to entertain a feeling sense of your sins, and be exceeding sorrowful for your offences. For how otherwise can your prayers, either of the closet or of the church, be acceptable to God, and obtain the relief ye desire, or the pardon ye supplicate? I have thought it a good opportunity to suggest these remarks on the conduct of Christ, at a memorable epoch of his life, because, it appeared to me to be most instructive, and to teach, by the most powerful of all examples, the qualifications

which are required to sanctify and beautify the prayers which we utter in private, and unite in offering in public—in the still chamber, or in the great congregation of the people.

You must not infer, Christians, that the agony of your compassionate Saviour on the occasion to which I have referred, however intense in its feeling and strong in its expression, originated in any sentiment of regret for the part he had undertaken to act in the approaching tragedy, or that he at all repented of his resolution to encounter all the shame and ignominy of the cross for the atonement of the people, and the salvation of sinners. No, my friends, no sentiment of the sort ever crossed his mind, or enervated his resolution. But as he had two natures, human and divine, so had he two distinct wills. As man, he feared and shunned death: as God, he willingly submitted to its infliction. And had there been included in it no more than the pain of lingering on a cross, our Lord would have shown more weakness in shrinking back from death, than many of his followers have since done upon the prospect of deaths more terrible, which they faced without fear, and endured without emotion, though, to all appearance not so divinely supported, seeing that his human nature was strengthened far beyond the natural pitch, by its union with the divine. But on him lay the iniquity of us all; and with the sins of the whole world he was then bruised and broken: whereas the martyrs in his cause had no such dreadful load accumulated upon them. They suffered, indeed, under the encouraging smiles of God's reconciled countenance; but Christ, for the sins of an apostate world, under his vengeful frowns. This embittered beyond measure the pains and sorrows he endured. For, notwithstanding an angel came from heaven, and strengthened him, yet they threw him into an agony; and the sense of his sufferings increased to such a degree, and so strained his whole body, that his blood was pressed through the pores of his skin, along with the sweat\*, and fell in great drops to the ground. Some of the commentators have taken this expression in a figurative sense, and have supposed, that as those who weep bitterly are said to weep blood, so those who sweat excessively, through acute and excessive labour and pain, may be considered as sweating blood. But others more justly conceive on this point, and affirm that the perspiration produced on our Lord's body was mixed in reality with blood to such a degree, that its colour and consistency were the same as if it had been wholly blood. And in corroboration of this view, there are several authors, who have given examples of sweats which have been actually mixed with blood. And physicians assure us, that such is the nature and constitution of the human frame, that this effect is often produced, and this emission is often to be witnessed. However this be, it must be acknowledged, that it was real blood that fell from the sacred body of our Lord. It was indeed miraculous, and was an invincible proof of the dreadful horror that filled his spirit, and of the excruciating agony that seized his soul. And, O what a comforting reflection is this to the mourning and penitent sinner, that he has a merciful and faithful High Priest, who himself hath suffered, being tempted, and is therefore able to succour them that are tempted! One that can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; and by

\* "*Tanta sudoris copia, ut non corpus humeclaret solum, sed etiam in terram caderet. Non sudor aqueus, sed sanguineus; nec guttæ, sed grumi. Cui exemplo quid unquam auditum simile, nedum æquale,*" saith Chamierus.—*See Smith on the Creed*, p. 163.



whom we can come "boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy in every time of need."

Having said so much upon the agony endured by the Saviour, I shall now advert to the place in which his passion occurred, and suggest some further reflections on his sufferings.

First, of the *place*. It was in a garden; a place to which he retired, not with the intention of shunning his infuriated enemies, and concealing himself from his murderous persecutors; for had such been his object, no place could have been more improperly selected. He had frequently resorted thither, and in company too with the traitor. Judas, therefore, well knew the chosen spot of his retired devotions, and of his warm and generous communications with himself and others. But Christ went thither to meet his enemies, and by prayer to prepare himself for the treachery of a once familiar friend, with whom he had been wont to take sweet counsel, and for the approach of a heartless and exasperated rabble. In the exercise of pouring out his soul unto God, he must have spent several hours, for it was in the evening that he entered into the garden, and it was not until midnight that Judas and his band came and apprehended him in a praying posture. And in what doth this attitude of our Lord instruct us? He shows us by his example, that when dangers approach—when troubles overwhelm us—yea, when the hour of death is coming—a place of prayer and an attitude of devotion are the very best in which we should be found, that we may have strength equal to the day of our trial, and the hour of our suffering, and be enabled to bear all, and to submit to all, with a humble and cheerful resignation to the will of our Father which is in heaven.

This garden—the scene of the Saviour's agony, was in the valley of Jehoshaphat, on the east side of Jerusalem, at the foot of mount Olivet, in which valley God did then plead with the nations in Christ their Surety. It was called Gethsemane, which signifies, *a very fat valley*, or the valley of oil, being, in all probability, the place in which the inhabitants pressed the olives that grew on the mount, and squeezed the oil out of them. Maundrell, in the account of his journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem, thus speaks of Gethsemane:—"It is an even plat of ground, not above fifty-seven yards square, lying between the foot of mount Olivet and the brook Cedron. It is well planted with olive trees, and at the upper corner of the garden is a flat naked ledge of rock, reputed to be the place on which the apostles, Peter, James, and John, fell asleep during the agony of our Lord. And a few paces from hence is a grotto, said to be the place in which Christ underwent that bitter part of his passion. About eight paces from the place where the apostles slept, is a small shred of ground, twelve yards long, and one broad, supposed to be the very path on which the traitor Judas walked up to Christ, saying, '*Hail Master! and kiss me!*'\*" Here it was, in this garden, that the Father was pleased to brise his own dearly beloved Son, our true Olive; that from his richness, from his fulness, the sweet, the fresh oil of his graces, and of his merits, might flow out abundantly for the beautifying of our souls, and the refreshing of our spirits. But never was there such an olive pressed on this spot before, since the foundation of that mount was laid! never did there flow out oil so rich—so inestimable—as the blood of

\* See Maundrell's Tour, 1697, page 142.

God's spotless Lamb! How happy they who partake of the root, and of the fatness of that invaluable Olive, that was here pressed and bruised for man's salvation; and of that oil, which will make our graces to grow, and our faces to shine pleasantly in the eyes of purity itself!

Man, after his creation, was first placed in a garden. There he offended his God, and fell; and there sin and misery commenced. And it was in a garden also, where Christ, his Surety, began to expiate his agony and bloody sweat. The garden of Eden was the productive source of all our wretchedness and woe, and was the cause of all our pains and sorrows. The garden of Gethsemane, on the other hand, produced a powerful remedy, a healing balm, and a sovereign medicine for every malady we experience, for every wound we receive, and for every disease to which our souls are subjected, from the old serpent of iniquity and sin. Where the poison grew; there also grew the antidote! And this is a pleasing reflection to every contemplative mind: and the idea of pleasure, as it has been beautifully remarked by a good man, is inseparable from that of a garden, where man still seeks after lost happiness, and where, perhaps, a good man finds the nearest resemblance of it which this world affords\*. "What is requisite," exclaims a great and original genius, "to make a wise and a happy man, but reflection and peace? And both are the natural growth of a garden. A garden to the virtuous is a Paradise still extant; a Paradise unlost†."

But there are other reflections with which an ordinary walk in a garden is connected: and whenever we have occasion to walk and meditate therein, for the improvement of the mind, and the exercise of the body, we should not fail to remember, that, in a garden, the holy and innocent Jesus—the loving Saviour, and the compassionate friend of mankind, began to be sore amazed, to be heavy in mind, and in an agony of spirit for our iniquities and sins; and that there he poured forth fervent ejaculations to heaven for our interest in his agony and death, and for his Spirit to witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, and sealed unto the day of redemption! Whenever we go to the Lord's table, we should call to mind his agony and bloody sweat in the garden; and when the cup is presented to our lips, "remember the cup of God's wrath that Christ drank in the garden."

When our dear Redeemer suffered—when his soul was in an agony, we read of his "offering up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death;" but still, with a submission the most complete, and a piety the most perfect, to the Divine will. Strong and bitter indeed were the cries of our Surety and Substitute, when "he bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; when he was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;" when "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities;" and when an overwhelming flood of wrath was poured out upon him. He cried until he was wearied and exhausted with pain, and his throat became dry and parched. And is it nothing to you, my brethren? Have ye no tears to shed, and no prayer to offer up to God, at the remembrance of a Saviour's sufferings, especially when you consider that your sins were the cursed

\* See Bishop Horne's Sermon on the Garden of Eden.

† Dr. Young—Centaur not Fabulous, p. 61.

cause of all his sufferings—the death of Jesus your Redeemer? Under all the agony of mind and body, inflicted by the hand of men, lo! he was silent, and opened not his mouth. He was submissive and dumb, as a sheep before her shearers: but, when the thunders of divine wrath burst upon him, he cried out vehemently—he earnestly and importunately prayed for deliverance and support under the dreadful storm that impended over him. And is not his example here also instructive? And does it not teach us, that when under trouble of soul—under the severest trials of affliction, and the strongest temptations of sin, we should cry with earnestness to God for mercy and relief; and persist in our applications for deliverance, till our prayers are heard, and our requests are granted; being encouraged to persevere from this pleasing consideration, that Christ's fervent prayers and tears have opened a way for us to the throne of mercy, by which ours can pass and reach the ear of Omnipotence, and be our prevailing intercessor, through a Redeemer's merits, at the right hand of the Majesty on high!

Secondly, the point to which I shall now lead your thoughts, is *the height to which the agony and passion of Christ were carried in the garden*. How wonderful the increase and progress of his sufferings! He was first sorrowful, heavy, and oppressed; then sore amazed; and at last in an agony—in such a violent and unheard-of agony, as to produce a bloody sweat over his body, and to force the crimson fluid through his skin, and to moisten both the garments with which he was clothed, and the ground upon which he lay! Think, O Christian, what trouble and anguish—what pangs and strugglings the Son of God must have endured in his soul, when his Father's wrath, for the sins of a guilty world, pressed upon him, and raised such a dreadful fermentation in his human frame! The suffering Redeemer lay in the open air, in a cold night, upon the cold ground, without any reviving or comforting cordial, all which, according to the ordinary course of nature, would have caused his blood to flow inward, and retire from the external parts of his body. But, with him, it was otherwise. He sweat without external heat, and he bled copiously without an external wound! What, then, was the cause that produced these preternatural effects? It was the fire which Almighty wrath had kindled in his soul, that made his blood to boil, and forced it through both his flesh and his raiment, and in the language of the prophet, caused him to be “red in his apparel, and his garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat.” All his “garments were sprinkled,” and all his “raiment was stained,” with the blood of the people, Isaiah, lxiii. 1. At the time in which his agony was endured, he had suffered no *external* violence. No Judas, no soldier, no executioner, had yet laid their hands upon him: no thorn, no scourge, no nail or spear, had yet touched or lacerated his sacred body; and yet his blood flows and falls “in great drops to the ground!” True; but the arrows of the Almighty had pierced his soul; the poison thereof had inflamed his spirit; the sword of stern justice had reached him, and inflicted a sore wound in the tenderest part. Jehovah's glittering spear had pierced his heart; and, at the opening made thereby, such a flood of wrath broke in upon his soul, as quite overwhelmed him, as made him stagger, yea, fall, first upon his knees, and then upon his face, prostrate upon the earth. In this situation, see him in his agony, until the waves and billows of Divine vengeance had passed over him! How heavy the load—how grievous the

pressure, under which the Saviour of sinners then lay ! How inconceivable the anguish that wrung his heart, and writhed his body ! O what a mournful spectacle to the eye of faith is an agonizing Saviour ? How awfully should our souls be impressed, and how feelingly our hearts affected by such a spectacle ! How should we bleed within us, to think that we have been, in a great measure, the sad cause of all this sanguinary exhibition ; that our apostacy and rebellion, our sins and disobedience, the corruption of our nature, the evil of our tempers, the sinfulness of our habits, and the inconsistency of our lives, have been the nails and the spear, the scourge and the Judas, that caused the bloody sweat and agony of the Redeemer ; and that it was for our salvation, that he was betrayed in a garden, and expired on a cross ! And when he calls us to remember his unspeakable love at a Sacramental table, with what readiness—with what cheerfulness and gratitude of heart should we reply, Yes, dearest Lord ! “ We will remember thy love more than wine ; ” thy praises shall be ever on our tongue, and our hearts shall rejoice in thy salvation. But small must be the esteem we entertain for the glorious Immanuel, and insensible must we be to the kindness he has done us, if we refuse to comply with this his last and easy injunction to his disciples—“ Do this in remembrance of me ! ” And O ! how great is the inconsistency of us, who are members of the church, who, on the same day on which we pray that “ we may diligently live after Christ’s commandments,” and beseech our good Lord to hear us in our petition, immediately show our contempt of his word and commandment, by turning our backs upon his ordinance. Would that you would consider seriously *each* of the petitions in the Litany, and by your praying and living, set it forth, and show it accordingly !

Thirdly, from the agony endured by the Lord Jesus, in the garden and on the cross, we are led to observe *what a hard and difficult thing it was to appease the Divine wrath, to satisfy justice for sin, and to reconcile an offended God to an offending race of rebels and sinners.* The laws of the Most High were broken and violated ; the majesty of heaven was thereby insulted and dishonoured ; and Jehovah himself could not, in justice, absolve such wilful and daring offenders from the punishment threatened against the violators of his law and commandments, without some adequate satisfaction for the insult that was offered, and the guilt that was incurred. The offence was against an infinite God ; and nothing but an infinite ransom could procure his deliverance, purchase his pardon, and reconcile God to guilty man. But, where was such a ransom to be found ? Where was the person—where was the created being, either in the courts of heaven, or on the face of the earth, who was capable of undergoing the punishment due to man’s transgressions—of bearing the weight of his iniquities, and satisfying all the demands of law and justice ? The answer is, None, from the highest seraph that treads the pavement of heaven, to the meanest of beings that sojourns on the hills or in the valleys on earth ; not one could be found, who was fit to undertake the arduous work of human redemption : and had not the Father of mercies, of his own free grace and goodness, commiserated our lost and wretched condition, no full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world, could have been made. Had not God, my children, provided himself a lamb for a burnt-offering, the wood must have been laid in order, the fire must have burnt in an unextinguishable flame—the hand of the avenger must have been



stretched forth, and we must have been slain, and have perished everlastingly. O the height, the depth, the breadth, and the length of the love of God in Christ—it surpasseth all knowledge! Such was his love to the world, that he gave his only dearly beloved Son to be born, to suffer shame and reproach, to bleed and die, that by his blood, and soul agony, he might pay our dreadful debt, repair the honours of a broken law, satisfy all the demands of justice, and reconcile us to that God, whose image we had defaced by our sins, and whose indignation we had provoked by our offences. None but the eternal Son of the Highest was qualified for this grand undertaking; and Him, infinite Wisdom provided, and sent to perfect and complete the mighty scheme of human salvation.

One of the most affecting and beautiful parts of sacred history is the offering up of Isaac by his father Abraham. It is a charming piece of sacred biography. The faith of the parent, and the obedience of the child; they are both alike admirable to contemplate; and the instruction they convey is of the very highest order, and of the purest delight to those who have drank deep at the sacred stream of Christian truth and wisdom. Where is the mind, that has been imbued with a taste for sacred things, that does not admire the strength and the purity of that feeling, that could prompt a father to give such an uncompromising test of his obedience, and that could spare not even a son, when duty required the sacrifice, and the fear and the love of the Lord demanded such a trial of parental strength? And who, that hath imbibed a taste for heavenly things, can withhold his admiration from a child, by whom the offering of a free and willing heart—for this is the beautiful moral that is conveyed—was thus triumphantly given? Who that has tasted of the pure and masculine pleasure of serving the Lord with all his soul and with all his strength, does not admire the resignation and the promptitude with which an Isaac “did this thing,” and yielded his body to be bound, and his person to be laid as a sacrifice on the altar.

But what! Shall our admiration exhaust itself on the type, and the great antitype receive no portion of its inspiring homage and adoration? Shall it not gleam, shall it not concentrate its rays upon Him, who said, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God! I am content to do it; yea, thy law is within my heart.” Then let me turn your attention to this obedient child of heaven, and meditate, for a few seconds, on the astonishing love of the blessed Jesus, by which he was prompted willingly to undertake our desperate cause, though he well knew the sacrifices it would cost him; that, not in imagination, but in reality, he would be the burnt offering that would be offered up in the stead of the people; and that dreadful sufferings must be endured, before the gracious purposes of his love could be accomplished, and the wondrous scheme of mercy and salvation to poor helpless, perishing sinners could be consummated. O, how greatly we are indebted to our compassionate Redeemer, who stepped in between an incensed God, and an offending people; and, by receiving the awful stroke of Almighty vengeance on his own head, saved them from the fatal blow! The cup of fury was mixed, and must be drunk; a cup full of indignation and curses, yea, pressed down, heaped up, shaken together, and running over; a cup which, if but tasted by the lips of men, or of angels, would have filled them with eternal

horror and never-ceasing anguish : yet, bitter as it was, the Redeemer took it, and rather than any of his chosen ones should taste it, drank it to its very dregs. This made the fountain of his blood to flow freely, as I have elsewhere remarked, before any outward wound was inflicted, or any personal violence was offered ; this opened his veins and pores to give it vent, without the aid of traitors and tormentors.

O Christians ! was the fountain of Christ's blood opened for the washing away of all sin and uncleanness ; and will you refuse to bring your polluted, sin-defiled souls to the fountain of purity ? Did the Son of God wrestle in pain and agony to obtain redemption for lost sinners ; and will not you wrestle as in agony, to secure an interest in this great redemption, to have the certain evidences established in your hearts, and evidenced in your lives ! The struggle may cost you some uneasiness, and subject you to some pain. The hills of the Lord and the mountains of Jerusalem, are not to be ascended without difficulty. The ramparts of salvation are not to be sealed without some sacrifice of personal convenience and ease. The city of the living God is not to be entered without many a hard struggle with flesh and blood. There is no passage to Canaan but through the Red Sea. The land of Jordan must be passed through ere you get even a Pisgah view of Paradise and its felicities. But mark me well : the view thereof will well repay the labour, and the pleasures thereof of that good land will well recompense thee the perils of the journey ; the deprivations of the way ; the fatigues of the body, and the efforts of the mind : for blessed indeed are they who have laid hold on Christ by true faith, who have taken him for their Lord and their God, their companion and example ; who are willing to give up all, to part with all, for his sake ; and " count all but loss and dung that they may win Christ, and be found in him."

I must now, lastly, draw to a termination these improving views and meditations on the agony and sufferings of Christ. And I observe, that they will be without the effect at which I have principally aimed, *if they fail to produce in your minds a conviction of the destructive nature and the odious character of sin*—of sin that occasioned the agony of the garden, and the passion of the cross. Who amongst you, that has reflected seriously on such a theme, and with the discerning eye of faith, has viewed the sufferings of the Redeemer, can henceforth make light of sin ? What heart so hard as not to melt in sorrow ? What eye so dry as not to be bathed in tears, when the bloody sweat and agony of the friend and Saviour of sinners are considered ? When viewed in the aspect in which I have endeavoured to represent them, how is it possible that they can fail to inflame your hearts with a perfect horror and detestation of sin, and to make you vow an eternal warfare against it, and never to cease from persecuting it, until such time as you have nailed it to the cross, and have crucified it in your mortal bodies. Would to God that the contemplation of the Redeemer's sufferings would this day produce the blessed effects within you ? Then indeed will it have been good for you to have been here ; then indeed will the preacher's object for once have been realised, and the hearer's good have been now attained. And, since it is such a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a holy, and just, and sin-hating God, let me beseech you from henceforth, to stand in awe and sin not : for " if such things were done in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry ?" If the cup of wrath were so dreadful to the holy and

innocent Jesus, that he shrunk from it, and cried out that it might pass from him, what must it be to guilty and polluted sinners? How precious the soul's redemption, since, before it could be accomplished, the Son of God must become incarnate; the Prince of men and angels must be born of a woman, and cradled in a manger at Bethlehem; the Lord of life, and the consolation of Israel, must cry in an agony at Gethsemane, and die on a cross at Calvary! Must unspotted purity be made sin, and perfect blessedness become a curse; and all to save our immortal souls from endless misery and perdition?

Strange that Christ should put so high a value upon them, and that we should prize them so lightly! that the Darling of heaven should tender his own life to redeem them from eternal death, and we sell them for the meanest trifle, and throw them away for a thing of nought—for some valueless object, and for some momentary indulgence; and like Esau for a mess of pottage, barter away our birthright as Christians, and our title to the inheritance of heaven! May the Father of mercies open our eyes to see the folly and madness of this act; and enable you, with Mary, to choose that better part which shall never be taken from you. Act in spiritual matters, as the children of this world do in their generation, in temporal concerns; and be so wise in the use and application of your immortal interests, as that you may be received into everlasting habitations. Convinced of the danger to which any neglect of interests so important must inevitably expose you, may it be the earnest language of your souls, "What shall we do to be saved?" Then, although your case may be dangerous, it will not be desperate. Though you have, as you admit in your confession, "followed too much the devices and desires of your own hearts"—though you have lived too much to sin, and too little to God, and you are, therefore, as you acknowledge and confess, "miserable offenders," and as such your condition is wretched, yet still, "there is hope in Israel concerning this thing." The Lord Jesus Christ became Surety for lost sinners: he substituted himself in their room and stead, and for them fulfilled the whole law, which they had broken—bore the punishment due to their offences, and brought in for them a complete, and an everlasting righteousness, that will justify us from all things, from which we could not be justified by the works of the law. Since Christ is the true *City of refuge* for penitent and convicted sinners, linger not by the way, but hasten and flee unto him, before the avenger of blood overtake you. Since he is the *Rock* of safety, conceal yourselves in the cleft thereof, until the all-devouring storm, which shall sweep away the world of iniquity, be overpast. Turn ye, "turn ye to the strong-hold, ye prisoners of hope, even to-day, and he will render double unto you." Swear ye fealty and homage to the Lord Jesus Christ; and as ye are not ashamed of him or of his Gospel, make him your example, your pattern, and your guide; and let it be your constant study to walk according to his holy precepts, and answerably to your Christian vocation. And may he work in one and all of you to do of his good pleasure, and to live a life of grace here, that you may lead the life of glory hereafter! And "now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy; to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

## THE ATONEMENT

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REV. R. NEWTON,

CITY ROAD CHAPEL, MAY 3, 1835 \*.

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"And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."—ROMANS, v. 11.

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INUTTERABLE and invaluable are the blessings which real Christians receive through our Lord Jesus Christ. They are especially and pre-eminently "blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." What the Apostle, in the text, describes, is an additional, and a very circumstantial and comprehensive detail of the benefits and privileges which belong to all who belong to Jesus Christ; common to all who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

He begins the detail by specifying the great and leading benefit of *justification*. This is essential to every man; because man, universal man, is a sinner; and if a sinner, then guilty; and if guilty, then under obligation to die. But the Gospel of Jesus Christ makes provision for the removal of this guilt, and for the justification of his person. "It is God that justifieth." And this great benefit formed the leading feature in the ministry of the first apostles of our Lord. Wherever they went they proclaimed "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are *justified* from all things, from which they could not be delivered by the law of Moses." The Apostle, in the connexion of the text, more than intimates in what way this great benefit was to be obtained; not on the ground of any meritorious sufferings which we may endure; not on the ground of the meritorious deeds that we can perform; but "we are justified by faith" (simple faith) "in our Lord Jesus Christ."

The next benefit specified by the Apostle is that of *peace* or reconciliation. No sooner are we "justified by faith," than we have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We are no longer in a hostile state; no longer do we sustain the character and attitude of enemies; but we are friends, brought into a state of amity and friendship with God, through Him who "was made our peace," who "hath made peace by the blood of his cross."

The Apostle then specifies the privilege or advantage of *access to the throne*; or as the word is rendered in the margin, of "introduction:" "By whom we have *introduction*:" as an obscure individual is by some individual of high rank and authority taken by the hand and presented at the throne. Thus Jehovah Jesus, the everlasting Son of the Father, introduces every penitent

\* On behalf of the Wesleyan Missionary Society.



believer to the throne: through Him we have that introduction; and on the ground of his authority and of his merits, we stand in that state of gracious favour and acceptance. This is the third evangelical benefit; as honourable as it is advantageous.

The Apostle then directs our attention onward to *the future*. Having described these three great privileges already realized, he directs our attention to that which is in reversion for us; to that which is the subject of our expectation. He says, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" and with such an object before us—*the glory of God*—we "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

"And not only so," says the Apostle, "not only have we these things in possession, not only have we all that in reversion, and all that sparkling to the eye of hope, cheering us as we travel onwards through this world; but we also glory." Ah, my friends, in what? "We also glory in *tribulation*." What! Tribulation, suffering, affliction, persecution, temptation, a ground and occasion of joy and of glorying! How can these things be? My friends, sanctified tribulation does the real Christian no harm; sanctified tribulation is a great blessing. To you it is given, in the way of royal favour and privilege, in behalf of Christ, "not only to believe, but to suffer for his sake." If it be not a sweet and delicious potion, it is a salutary and healing medicine, intended to operate for our spiritual advantage. And therefore, says the Apostle, "*Tribulation worketh patience*." And is not this a good reason why you should glory in it? What is a Christian without patience? "*Tribulation worketh patience*:" and as tribulation becomes an occasion for the exercise of patience, patience in its exercise acquires additional strength and vigour. In patience, therefore, possess your souls.

"*Patience worketh experience*." And what is a Christian without experience? We must have experience in religion; experience in the things of God. And how does tribulation work experience? Why, when we have grace given us to endure our tribulations with patience, with resignation, without murmuring, we prove the sufficiency of the grace of God to enable us thus to live, and thus to suffer: and thus "*patience worketh experience*;" experience of the all-sufficient grace of God, and of his power and will to save.

"And experience worketh *hope*." And what is a Christian without hope? "We are saved by hope." And how does experience work hope? Why the experience of the all-sufficient grace of God to keep and save in every trying moment, in time past and in time present. Such experience may work hope, and encourage hope for the time to come. He *hath* delivered; and therefore he *will* deliver. And then this hope which the Christian indulges will not cover him with confusion; it will not make him blush; it will not disappoint the expectation which he entertains; for, says he, "*Hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God*"—this is the very earnest of the heaven we hope to enjoy; the very element of that heaven where we hope to dwell for ever and ever—"the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." This love of God in the heart of man is indeed the religion of angels enjoyed by man—the religion of heaven realized on earth; for what can angels more than love God and his worship?

The Apostle then goes on to observe, that, as we have been "reconciled to

God by the death of his Son," this fact authorizes the indulgence of the confident expectation, that "we shall be *saved* by his life:" for he lives to bestow what he bled on the cross to procure.

Is there any thing more that remains to be named? Any other part of the Christian's treasure yet to be specified? O yes, infinitely more: "Not only so, but we also"—in addition to all the rest—"we also joy in God" (what words are these!) "we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received *the atonement*." The atonement; the reception of the atonement; and the joy in God through Christ which this occasions, are the three points principally noticeable in the passage which I have read; and which may (God grant they may!) profitably occupy our attention this morning.

THE ATONEMENT. What means the Apostle by this? My friends are aware, that "to atone," signifies "to appease;" to propitiate, on the ground of some valuable consideration that is presented and accepted. Now, the Holy Scriptures, as it appears to me, most distinctly and clearly teach, that the sacrificial death of Jesus upon the cross, was the valuable—I will say the infinitely valuable—consideration that was presented to eternal justice, to make satisfaction for the sin of guilty man. Or, if we take the marginal rendering of these words, which perhaps is the more literal rendering, the idea is still substantially the same: there the word is rendered "the reconciliation." But then reconciliation supposes that there must have been some disagreement; and where that disagreement had existed, there must have been some consideration, and some ground, on which reconciliation was effected.

Now my friends need not to be informed, as though to this hour they had not been impressed with the melancholy fact, that earth has become hostile to heaven, and that man has rebelled against his Maker; that man is not now the creature he was when God made him. To my mind it is utterly inconceivable, that the only wise God, the essentially holy God, could make man the creature he now is. "The holy God" must have made man holy: "the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness," must have made man, as a moral being, righteous: and holy and righteous he *was* when God formed him. But he is not so *now*: some sad thing must have befallen man since God formed him: and this Book tells us *how* it was, and *what* it was: that though God created man upright, and crowned him with glory and with honour, by transgression he fell. And man *is* fallen, say what you will. It is an awful fact; man is fallen from God: and the man that would question this, why heaven and earth would rise up to confront him: "Hear O heavens, and give ear O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." And, my friends, mark the aggravating circumstances with which that rebellion is there characterized. In the first place, it is most *unnatural* rebellion; it is the rebellion of children against the parent of their existence. And have not all one Father, even God? Then again, it is most *ungrateful*, as unnatural; it is the rebellion, not only of children against their parent, but of rebels; of children that have been nourished and have been brought up; and yet, notwithstanding all this care and nurture, and bounty—after all they have rebelled against their Parent and their Benefactor. And think you this is true of the Jewish people exclusively? It is equally true

of us "sinners of the Gentiles:" for sin is rebellion; and "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." It is true of every man; of man in every clime; of man of every colour; of man of every language and tongue:

"Our species up in arms; not one exempt."

And what then is to be done? Is man to go on in his rebellion till justice hurl the rebel to the pit; till he is cut down; till he is swept away with the besom of destruction? Guilty, offending, rebel man could not reconcile himself: he could furnish no consideration sufficiently valuable: his fellow-man could not help him; an angel's arm could not rescue him from impending ruin. But, when his condition seemed to admit no ray of hope, a redeeming scheme was announced to the very first delinquents; and it was promised that a great Deliverer should arise, one that should suffer that man should be saved; and "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses."

Now, then, we say, this reconciliation or atonement is *divine in its appointment*. To the divine Father it belonged, as his absolute prerogative, to say what should be done on this awful emergency. Had he doomed us to bear the punishment due to our sins, we had been undone. But it was his sovereign will and pleasure, that Jehovah Jesus should assume our nature; that in his instance the human nature should be immaculate and undefiled; and that in our nature and our world, he should live, and suffer, and die, and that his death upon the cross should be a proper atonement for the sins of our guilty race. "And this," says the Apostle, when speaking on the subject of our redemption by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, "this was according to the will of God." This will which was absolute, and which was perpetual in its love, and dictated by his infinite wisdom, was the origin of man's redemption."

And have you, my friends, considered the word employed by the Apostle on this subject in another place, where he says, "*It became him*"—a very remarkable expression—"it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings?" He must be a complete Saviour by being a sufferer: and, says the Apostle, "it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," to do this. *It became him*. Did it so? Why there are very many of our fellow creatures, (aye, and those who hear the name of Christian, too, and those who are self-named "rational Christians" too,) who will not hesitate to affirm, that it became him, the Divine Being, to do no such thing. An inspired Apostle affirms that it *did* become him to do so; and the only question with you and me is, Who is to be believed? Ah, "let God be true, though every man be a liar." We say, that Jehovah *alone* was competent to say what it became him to do. We say no man was competent to say: no angel, not Michael, not Gabriel the archangel, was competent to this: Jehovah alone could see all his own infinite perfections, in all their relations to each other, and in all their relations to the universe of creatures: and he alone saw what these perfections required that they might be preserved in perfect harmony; that they might not eclipse each other's glory; that they might continue through eternity to shine,

"In their full blaze,  
And their whole round of rays complete."

He alone was competent to say what the order and arrangement of his government required him to do in this emergency ; what the authority of the law properly demanded. And He who alone was competent to say what ought to be done, and what became him to do, had alone the right. What ! had man at the bar the right ? The culprit at the bar, was he to dictate to the Judge what became him to do ? Would this be allowed in any well-regulated government on the face of the earth ? Did it become an angel to say this ? No, but to the absolute Sovereign of the Universe. He, then, alone, who had the absolute right to say what should be done, hath asserted his own eternal prerogative, and he hath instructed an inspired Apostle to say, it did become him. It was worthy him ; and we bless him for it. " It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

And now, my friends, you will perceive, that the result of this atonement depends, not so much on the fact that Jesus lived, and suffered, and died. There are many who readily admit this ; and where is the man who has any respect to his own reputation that would deny this ? Every well-instructed child in a Sabbath school could confront him if he denied this. But then they would inform you, that his sufferings were *exemplary*, not *vicarious* ; that his death was *testamentary*, not *sacrificial*. If there be any meaning in words, and if there be any certainty at all in the clearest arrangement of words in what we call language ; then there is the greatest certainty of all that the death of Jesus on the cross was, by the wise, and gracious, and peculiar appointment of the divine Father, a real and proper atonement for the sins of the people.

Now, I am not going, at present, to travel out of the immediate connexion of the text to prove this : I will only repeat to you two verses in its immediate connexion, which are decisive on the point. The first is in the sixth verse. There the Apostle says, " Christ died for the ungodly." Now I put it to the candour and the good sense of every man, if it be conceivable that the doctrine of substitution, of vicarious sufferings, can be more simply, and therefore more certainly, expressed : " Christ died for the ungodly." The other text is the one immediately preceding the text itself, where the Apostle says, " We were *reconciled* to God"—the very word in our text rendered " the atonement"—" We were reconciled to God." Ah ! how was it ? By the *teaching* of his Son, so instructive, so captivating, so important ? " Never man spake like this man." " Reconciled to God"—how ? By the *example* of his Son, so immaculate, so benevolent, so useful ? " He went about doing good." " Reconciled to God"—how ? By the *tears* of his Son, so frequent, so copious, so generous ? for " Jesus wept," and he was " a man of sorrows." " Reconciled to God"—how ? By the *prayers* of his Son, so fervent, so comprehensive, so continuous ? Ah, my friends, if *men* thus speak, thus hath not *the Lord* spoken ! " We were reconciled to God," says the Apostle, " by the *death* of his Son : " that is the ground—that is the only meritorious ground, on which man can be reconciled to his God.

Then, let me say, that his atonement or reconciliation, being divine in its appointment, is *complete in its nature*. Now, those typical atonements, which shadowed forth this great sacrifice under preceding dispensations of the church, were, however, in their own *nature* imperfect : they must necessarily have been



so, because it was the mere blood of the animal that was shed, in which there was no real intrinsic worth. Then they were imperfect in their very *design*. They were only intended to be shadows of better things to come. Then again the very circumstance of their *repetition* was a strong indication of their imperfection; because if one had been complete, why then repeat the sacrifice? Why the sacrifice made every day—every morning, every evening? Why the sacrifice every year, especially on the great and annual day of atonement? But because they were thus repeated, it is clear they were imperfect. But what speaks the Apostle to the Hebrews—which is a comment on the Mosaic institute, and especially on the Jewish sacrifices? He tells us that Christ was offered himself “*once*”—and that word is emphatic—“*once* for all.” Why does he use that word “*once*?” Because once offered, it was complete; once offered, eternal redemption was procured.

The sufferings of our Saviour were intense. How did he suffer from man, and from devils! And what must his sufferings have been, when, according to the language of the prophet, “it pleased the Lord to bruise him,” and to “put him to grief,” and to “lay on him the iniquity of us all!” What must his sufferings have been, when his “soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death!” What must his sufferings have been, when his mental agony forced blood from the pores of his body, when there was no external violence on him whatsoever!

But still, though some men and some books describe the sufferings of Christ in a very touching, impressive manner, we do well always to remember, that without the supreme and essential dignity of Christ as a divine person, his sufferings in our nature could have been of no avail, no avail whatsoever. However holy in his person, however upright, however glorious, however benevolent, had Jesus been a mere creature—however high in the scale of being, but a creature still—his sufferings could not have expiated the sins of the untold myriads of our race. But then remember, he was “God manifest in the flesh.” Remember, that “the Word that was with God, and the Word that was God,” truly and essentially divine, “assumed flesh, and dwelt among us,” and in our nature suffered. And though Deity could not suffer—the divine nature is impassable—a body was provided for the Redeemer that could suffer, and did suffer, in the union of the human nature that suffered with the divine. That is the point that stamped his sufferings with infinite value: so that it was a sacrifice, and an offering, and a sweet smelling savour. There was a merit in it beyond all that mortals can express; beyond all that human thought can conceive: and it was fully adequate to all the great ends and purposes of its design. Hereby justice receives its demands; hereby the holiness of God is preserved untarnished; hereby the wisdom of God is testified in devising such an expedient; hereby the inviolable truth of God is preserved; the divine penalty of the law is inflicted, though it is on the person of our Substitute: hereby sin becomes remissible, consistently with all the claims and all the high attributes of justice, holiness, and truth; hereby the greatest hatred to sin is expressed, while the greatest compassion to the sinner is manifested.

What a meeting was that described by the royal Psalmist, referring to this: “Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other!” What then? Had there been some difference in the counsels of these

attributes? Had they seemed to be at variance one with another? And do they meet together, and are they reconciled again, and do they meet in everlasting bonds of friendship? *Where* was the meeting? It was on Mount Calvary. In *whom* did they meet? In the person of our suffering Lord. There it was that "mercy and truth met together;" there it was that "righteousness and peace embraced each other." And now the moral attributes of God through Jesus Christ are in harmony, and will shine forth with transcendent glory to all eternity.

Let me add, that this atonement, thus complete in its nature, is *unchanging in its efficacy*. There are some remedies that are very efficacious for a time; but through the lapse of time, and the circumstances of time, may lose their efficacy, and become useless. Thank God, it is otherwise *here*. This sovereign remedy has not lost its power through the revolution of years. The balm of Gilead is as efficacious now, as when it first began to ooze from the sacred wounded tree on Mount Calvary. There was a pool in Jerusalem, the waters of which, at a certain season, had a very extraordinary healing virtue, so that "whosoever stepped in first after the troubling of the waters was healed of whatsoever disease he had." Some writers have affirmed, that this was the pool into which the blood of the sacrifices ran. Be this as it may, all seem agreed, that there was something symbolical in this, that there must have been here an emblematical representation of the healing blood of the atonement, the blood of Jesus Christ. But then there was a circumstance in this pool that made a disparity. In the case of that pool it was only the *first* man who stepped in who obtained the cure; all the rest were disappointed. But it is otherwise *here*: here is a fountain open, and always open; a "fountain open for sin and uncleanness:" and it is not the first man that steps in, no nor the second man, not the thousandth man that steps in, that obtains the cure; but *all* who

"Plunge into this purple flood,  
Rise unto the life of God."

And if, my friends, we are prepared this morning, by a vigorous act of faith, to plunge into that crimson flood, we shall prove the virtue of the blood of Jesus.

"Ah, but so many centuries have elapsed since that atonement was shed. Had I been where the soldier was, and had I beheld the blood and water mingled gush from that side, I could not have doubted its efficacy and its power: but eighteen centuries have passed away." Yes, my friends, but still the atonement has not lost its power. Remember you not what John beheld, when wrapped in an entranced vision in the Isle of Patmos; and, amongst the rest, he saw "in the midst of the throne *a Lamb*:" yes, an emblem of the sacrifice of the atonement; a sacrificial Lamb. But it was another thing for the sake of which I introduced that passage: he saw "in the midst of the throne a lamb, as it had been *newly slain*." Why several years had elapsed when John had that representation; several years had gone by between that time and the precise period when the sacrifice of Calvary was offered. No matter; let some twenty or thirty years have revolved, the sacrifice appears, as it were, as a lamb that was newly slain. And if we had this morning the powers of vision John exercised, and if *we* could penetrate into that world, we should behold the same emblem of the atonement and the lamb as newly

slain; and that blood as efficacious *now*, as when it flowed from the Saviour's side.

"Ah," say some, "and we agree with the preacher in these three points—the atonement was unquestionably of divine appointment: and because of divine appointment must have been adequate for the end for which it was appointed; for a holy and wise God can do nothing in vain: and because complete in its nature, therefore unchanging in its efficacy, or how could it be complete? and must remain so: still this mediatorial system continues, and still the world remains. But then the point is, Was that atonement made for me?"

"Was that precious blood shed, my sin to atone?"

Ah! my fellow sinner; that is the question: Was it made for *thee*, and was it made for *me*? I have met with perhaps some scores, certainly with very many individuals, in different parts of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in the course of the last thirty years, whose minds on this point have been so perplexed, that in some instances their very understandings were all but upset. "If I were satisfied on this point," some have said, "I should have relief in a moment. If I could believe that Christ shed his blood for me, I could embrace that Saviour." Now what could I say to these people? I tell you most ingenuously what I have said, again and again. I have asked, "Who are you?" "Who are we?" they have replied, with the big tears streaming from their eyes: "Who are we? We are poor, guilty, perishing sinners." I have asked, "Are you quite sure of that? Are you certain that you are?" "Certain? Ah! as certain as we exist: there is nothing that we believe, nothing that we know, that is more certain than this—that we are sinners; poor, guilty, perishing sinners." "Well then," I have said, "I am equally clear, that, if you are a poor, guilty, perishing sinner, here is a Saviour." Nay: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save"—to save whom? This man, and that man? Him, and not me? This is not "to save." No; he came to save *sinners*: and if you can only prove to me that you are sinners, I engage any day to prove to you that he is a Saviour for you: "For he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our's only"—hear it, all you that are desponding, and all but in despair—"not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world." He became our kinsman redeemer; as the law provided that the next of kin must be the man who had the right to redeem those that were involved: none but he could interfere, but he from his consanguinity had the right to redeem. There was a meaning in this; there was a strong evangelical view here. The reference to it is evangelical. The Apostle describes Jesus as taking on him, "not the nature of angels:" had he took on him the nature of angels, that would not have made him our kinsman: but says he, "he took upon him the seed of Abraham:" he took upon him our human nature. Why I defy any man living to prove to me that there was ever a human being in the world, or ever will be, whose common nature Jesus did not assume. He took upon him our common nature: then I say he was kinsman of my own; and, if the kinsman of every man, he had the right of redemption for every man, and he by the grace of God, "tasted death for every man."

Here, then, is the remedy, a sovereign remedy, a sufficient remedy, a sufficient

atonement. But, then, an *unapplied* remedy is no remedy for me or for you. It is not enough that the remedy is presented, and pressed on your acceptance; the remedy must be *received* and *applied*, or the cure cannot be effected. It is not enough that we are redeemed by Christ—and, thank God, we are redeemed by Christ—but we must be redeemed by the power of the atonement; it must be applied and received.

What, then, is it TO RECEIVE THE ATONEMENT?

In the first place it must be received *by an act of the mind*, on conviction that it is the truth. To my mind, it appears a vital doctrine of evangelical religion, that when God reveals any great truth to man, for the examination of man, and the credence of man, and the reception of man, he takes care that that great doctrine, or truth, shall be attested with evidences of credibility, sufficient to produce conviction on every unbiassed mind. Now, I think this is the case with reference to the doctrine of the atonement by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. To my mind there is no doctrine of revealed religion, as unfolded in this book, more distinctly revealed, more amply attested, than the doctrine of the atonement for sin by the sacrifice of Jesus. I find it asserted in the promise made to the patriarchs; I find it contained in the announcements of the Hebrew prophets; for “to him gave all the prophets witness:” and they gave witness to him as a suffering Saviour. I find it in the symbolical representations of the Mosaic institute; in the whole sacrificial system I see “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” I find it expressly asserted by our Lord in his own personal ministry: and I find, in almost every page in the epistles addressed to the different churches of Jesus Christ—I find it applied throughout, and variously, in the apocalyptic vision. This great doctrine sparkles all over the face of God’s revealed truth: it shines, as with a sun-beam, in almost every page in the Inspired Volume. It is (if such a figure may be allowed) the golden thread, that is so interwoven with the whole texture of revealed truth in this book, that you cannot draw it out but you tear the whole.

My conviction is, however, that this may be admitted by the understanding, where it is not received cordially; where it is not experimentally received. It is one thing for the understanding to be convinced of truth; and it is another thing for that truth to be cordially embraced; and the atonement of sin experimentally received. And if the former include all that a man can *know* and prove, and all that he can ascertain by intellectual operation, the latter implies what a man can *feel* and realize in his own experience. And I think, my friends, no man will ever thus experimentally receive the atonement, till he has received another great truth antecedent to this; and a great truth which lies at the foundation of all evangelical truth; and that is, the universal depravity and guilt of man. I never yet met with a man who was disposed to quibble at the doctrine of the atonement, or deny it, who, so far as I could perceive, had any just scriptural views of sin. On the other hand, I know not that I ever met with a man in my life, who appeared to see the evil, and feel the bitterness of sin, who was disposed to question or deny the doctrine of the atonement for sin. These two things are connected together. If I am not a sinner, or if sin be a very trivial thing, where is the necessity of atonement? But if I am a sinner, and if the demerit of sin be beyond all that I can conceive, why, then,



I must have a refuge somewhere ; there must be an atoning sacrifice somewhere, or I am undone.

I well remember a conversation I had with a personal friend of my own, who was educated in another creed, and who, for many years of his life, was disposed stoutly to deny every idea of atonement by vicarious sufferings. However, books were put into his hands, and he was led, by a friend of his in this city, to attend some meetings for social prayer ; when his heart was touched, and when he began to think, "There is something more in what they call evangelical religion than I am aware of:" and he began to doubt, that his former views might not be perfectly correct; and to apply himself in good earnest to the arguments to prove the doctrine of the atonement. "And," said he, "my understanding was convinced ; I felt I could not answer the arguments. But for months after my understanding was convinced, that as sure as the Scriptures are true, the doctrine of the atonement is divine ; yet," said he, "for months my heart rebelled : the pride of my heart could not brook it ; and I still rejected it : " (that gentleman is now, not only member of our society, but a class leader) "and it was not till I had received a deeper conviction of sin, and 'the commandment came,' in all its power and force, on my conscience, and I received the sentence of death in my own soul as a sinner, that I was disposed heartily to venture on the atonement of Christ. But then, all the pride of my intellect forsook me : I saw and felt I was a guilty sinner before God ; that I could furnish no meritorious ground on which to stand before my Creator. I saw the suitability and the excellency of the provision made in the atonement. Then it was, by simple faith, that I ventured on that atonement, and proved its efficacy."

And so must you and I. We must *feel* that we are guilty : we must despair of help from any other quarter ; and shut up to the faith of the Gospel, seeing that this is the only refuge for us, we must take shelter there, and by simple faith venture on Jesus ; seek, until we find redemption in his blood, the forgiveness of our sins. Nor are we to stop here. In this book it is asserted, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." The blood of Christ is not only atoning blood, and therefore our guilt may be cleansed ; but it is pardoning blood, and therefore our nature may be made clean.

It is proper, however, to add, that the atonement must be *practically* received. All the doctrines of the Gospel are practical in their tendency and design. Name to me any doctrine that cannot be brought to bear on the practice, temper, and conduct, and I engage to prove that it is not essentially a doctrine of the Gospel. *They* are all doctrines "according to godliness:" and this is pre-eminently the case with the doctrine of the atonement ; it is calculated to exert a powerful and hallowing influence on human conduct. Are there not some who need now to be reminded of this ? Do not some of us speak (and perhaps there are some who speak very fluently) on the atonement of Christ, on the promises of Christ, and on the superabounding grace of Christ : but are they all the while "denying themselves of ungodliness, and worldly lusts," and "living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world?" My dear friends, the doctrine of the atonement is not received *savingly* where it is not received *practically* : that man does not truly and really glory in the cross of Christ, who is not, by the cross of Christ, crucified to the world, and the world crucified unto him. Hear how Paul teaches those to whom he writes

the practical use of this doctrine. The love of Christ constraineth us," he says, "because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live"—that obtain life by his death—"should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them." Addressing the Corinthians in another place, he says, "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price;" ye are the property of another; ye are involved; ye have been redeemed by a price; ye are not your own; "therefore"—for this very reason—"therefore glorify God," (he is your redeeming God)—"therefore glorify God in your body, and your spirit, which are God's." But if we have cordially and believingly received the doctrine of the atonement, and realized the power and the efficacy of that precious blood, then shall we be found walking in the truth; then will the love of Christ constrain us in the path of obedience. Talk you of morals? Yes, the sages of antiquity did; and very eloquently. Talk you of morals? Yes, our modern infidels, our sneering infidels talk, and some of *them* talk very eloquently on the subject. Talk they of morals? Ah! but we want something more than *talk*. Talk they of morals?

"O thou bleeding Lamb!  
Thou Maker of new morals to mankind!  
The great morality is, Love of Thee."

Let the love of God in Christ penetrate the heart of man; let it become a living, powerful principle in the heart of man, and it is a principle that will operate in all circumstances, and all conditions, and will prompt us on in the path of holy obedience.

Where the atonement is thus received, great will be THE JOY.

In the first place, we have *joy*. What is joy? It is a very agreeable emotion—just the opposite of sorrow and grief. It is the essence of grief to depress and contract; it is the essence of joy to dilate and elevate. But then we are not now speaking of mere human passion or emotion; but we are speaking of a divine affection; we are speaking of joy, which shall operate in the spirit, in the heart of the man who has believed and received the atonement. "The fruit of the Spirit is joy." Before you received the atonement you had sorrow, had you not? Ah! sorrow filled your hearts; and sometimes the sorrow was all but overwhelming; every refuge seemed to fail, and you said, "What shall I do?" "What can I do?" At last you were directed to the atonement: you saw its suitableness and its adaptation, that it was just what your case required: and you ventured on that atonement; you received the reconciliation; sorrow fled away, and joy, and peace, and hope, and love, and happiness sprung up in your heart. Have you forgotten that hour? Surely it was to you a never-to-be-forgotten hour; and when you think of it now, does it not rekindle and re-awaken your joy?

But then, this is not all: we have not joy simply, but we "*joy in God*." We do not merely joy in this justification, though that is a ground of joy; we do not joy merely in this reconciliation, though that is a ground of joy; we do not joy in this introduction to the throne, though that is a ground of joy; we do not joy merely in the prospect of glory that awaits us yonder, when we arrive at our Father's house, though that is an occasion of joy; we do not rejoice in

tribulation, though there are many reasons why we should; we do not rejoice in any thing we have of ourselves—not in our wisdom, our wealth, our might, our influence. No; if any man joy or glory, let him “glory in the Lord.”

“We joy in God himself.” How can we explain this? Here is a depth of meaning which none but adult Christians can fathom. Let us endeavour to explain this, by another and somewhat parallel passage, as it appears to me: “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.” He that has received the atonement, and dwells in joy, “dwells in God, and God in him.” And where he dwells, he joys and rejoices. Thus there is a mutual indwelling: and the man that thus dwells in God, and that in a sense which is not in the power of language to utter, keeps himself surrounded with God, in the presence of God, dwelling in God as his portion and his all; he “joys in God;” and well he may. He “joys in God:” in all he has—in his wisdom to guide and direct; in his power to keep and defend; in his grace to renew and save.

But how can we thus joy in God? How can we thus come to God? How can we thus have access to God? The Apostle tells you *how*—“through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Yes, through this very atonement of our Lord Jesus. The way was shut up, we could not re-open it: the way was shut up, and man was shut out: but Jesus interposed his blood, and opened a way into the holiest of all. There was no access into the holiest of all but by the intervention of blood: and we cannot come to God, we cannot dwell in God, but through the atonement of Jesus Christ. I will fearlessly say, fallen man, even from the first moment of his apostacy to this hour, has never approached his Creator with success, but through the intervention of blood. “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” If we are made one, it must be by the blood of Christ.

Then how *rational* is this joy. Not like the joy of the wicked, for which no reason can be given: but the believer has good reason for the joy which he feels. Jesus closed his eyes to shew us God; and through the atonement of Jesus we come to God; and he is our Father and our friend. Good reason have we to rejoice.

How *pure* is this joy. Those who dwell here, dwell in a sacred and holy atmosphere: there is nothing to tarnish; nothing to defile. Not like the polluted and polluting joys of sin: all here is holy, spiritual, heavenly, and divine.

How *lasting* is this joy. Not like the short-lived joys of the wicked, which, to use the strong figure of the wise man, are “like the crackling of thorns under a pot;” you hear the crackling noise, and see the flash; but it is over, and all ends in smoke and darkness. But this joy in God is a pure joy; it is a permanent joy; it is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. It is a plant of Paradise; it is a divine exotic in the heart of the believer; and it lives and it blooms. Yes, and it is not in the power of all the nipping frosts of adversity to blight this plant: it is not in the power of the cold, bitter blasts of winter—the winter of temptation and affliction—to destroy or to wither this plant of Paradise; still it blooms. Aye, and the rough hand of death cannot kill this plant: it passes through the valley of the shadow of death, and then the noble plant, transplanted from this sublunary abode, shall flourish there, and put forth all its beauty. It is joy undying; joy ever during: “In his

presence there is fulness of joy ; and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore." And I love that word "more" that comes after the "for ever : for be the "for ever" as long as you please, there is always the "more" behind it ; and that is enough for me and for you : there is always "more" joy, "more" heaven, "more" glory, "more" happiness, "for ever."

Let us learn from this subject, my friends, *how vital to evangelical, saving religion, is this great doctrine of the atonement.* No acceptance with God without the atonement ; no joy without the atonement. Some who hear me may think I take strong views of this subject. I confess to you, the longer I live, my views on this subject are the stronger. The longer I live, the more I deem it my glory and my joy to preach Christ crucified ; the atonement for sin. The doctrine of the atonement lies at the root of all religion. What can there be vital or efficacious in religion without this ? Let me use a figure, which may not have struck some of you. It is this—Can there be life in a system where there is no *blood* ? Is there any part of your frame that is vital, where there is not blood ? You know there are the excrescences—the hairs of your head, and the nails of your fingers : there is nothing vital there ; and there is no blood. But where there is life there is blood : and I maintain that any system, under the name of religion, that does not provide for the blood of atonement and the influences of the Spirit, cannot be alive. There may be a body ; and to look at it, it may be fitly framed. There may be a body of certain doctrines, and obligations, and forms, and ceremonies ; and we are attracted by this body ; we approach this body. We look ; but it moves not : we listen ; it breathes not : we approach nearer still ; we touch it—it is *cold* ! "Why," we exclaim, "it is *dead* ! It is a dead body ! There is no breath ; there is no heat ; there is no life !" How could it be ? there is no *atoning blood* ! The vital fluid is not there ; the Spirit of the Living God is not there. it is excluded by the system. And what is it, I ask, gives vitality, life, and warmth, to the evangelical system—the whole body of doctrines, duties, and ordinances ? I tell you what it is—It is the blood of the atonement ; the vital fluid that circulates through all the veins of the evangelical system ; every vein of the whole body of ordinances, and doctrines, and duties, and privileges : and it is this vital current that animates the whole, and that gives life to all, and efficiency and power to all.

I wonder not, therefore, that the doctrine of the atonement has been so precious in the estimation of the saints and servants of God, the ministers and people of God, in every age of the world. I wonder not that the words of St. Peter have been so often reiterated by the saints and servants of God, living and dying, "The precious blood of Jesus." "The precious blood of Christ." "What," said a dying saint to me, but the other day, the pious widow of a long since deceased clergyman—"What should I do without the blood of the atonement !" O this doctrine is the basis of our hopes, our ground of confidence towards God the Saviour and our God. Continue, my dear friends, by faith to receive this life-giving truth, and your religion can never die.

Secondly : We learn that *this life-giving religion is a joy-producing religion ; a happy religion.* For where this is, there is joy, there is happiness, there is triumph, there is "glory" in it—for that is the word. Who, then, art thou



who art saying, with a solemn tone, "Religion! Evangelical religion! Why it is at once the parent and the nurse of moping and melancholy. Serious religion! The most gloomy thing in the world. A serious Christian! Why the most joyless creature in existence." Ah, my friends, it is too late in the day to come with any solemn tone like this. The religion of Jesus gloomy! The religion of Jesus a joyless religion! No, no; the joy is *our's*, not *your's*.

"Religion never was designed  
To make our pleasures less."

Religion is the life of all our delights, and the soul of all our joys. Whoever thought of going to a man blind from his youth to learn from him the doctrine and theory of colours? He never saw them in his life. He would say, "Art thou blind also?" Whoever thought of going to a man who never saw or tasted honey all the days of his life, to ask him whether it was sweet? If he be a honest man he would say, "I cannot tell; some have tasted it, and say it is sweet; but I never tasted it." There would be something like honesty in that. If you are an honest man, you will admit that you have never tasted, and therefore are incompetent to judge. But we *have* tasted, and we *can* tell: we, through the Holy Spirit, can tell you better things. We have tasted the honey out of the rock; the dropping of the honey from the comb: and this religion of Jesus, this religion of love, is "sweeter than the honey-comb."

Let us learn, thirdly, that this life-giving, joy-producing, religion may be *our's* even *now*. This word is emphatical: for, says he, "we have *now* received the atonement." And the persons to whom he addressed the words must have known that they had received the atonement, or they could not rejoice in God on that behalf. Now there are some well-intentioned professing Christians, as it appears to me, who rob themselves of much of the comfort they might enjoy, because they look at the blessing as beyond, at a distance, and something not to be presently enjoyed.

Will you allow me to relate to you a case which was related to me a few years ago, which occurred in the town of Liverpool, where I have spent nine happy years of my life. A man who had landed there from a very distant part of the world, and who had almost made the tour of the world, was going up and down in that town to witness any thing which might interest the stranger. He happened to go near our Leeds-street Chapel in that town. It was a fine summer's evening, about seven or eight o'clock. He heard a sound that attracted his attention. He perceived it was the sound of devotion: he followed the sound till he found himself in our Leeds-street Chapel, and saw some forty or fifty persons under one of the side galleries, engaged in singing and in social prayer. They sung with great spirit and great simplicity two or three verses; then a person prayed for a few minutes; another verse was sung, and another person prayed for a few minutes. He was riveted to the very spot: in all his travels he had never seen the like; the simplicity, the fervour of the people: and yet by their appearance they evidently belonged to the working classes, who, after the occupations of the day, had thus convened together for social prayer. He related this occurrence in several circles, and expressed his highest admiration of it: but there was one word (as the matter was related to me) to which he took an exception: and it was the very word in my text; it

was this word "*now*." Whoever prayed (and it appears some four or five persons were so engaged) every one without exception used the word *now* ;" and the gentleman thought it was going rather too far ; that this was not merely prescribing to the Divine Being *what* he was to do, but *when* he was to do it: he thought the Word of God had told men what he *intended* to do for them, and therefore they were authorized to ask only what God had promised to give: but this word "*now*" was carrying it rather too far. If that gentleman had been, after all, as familiar with his Bible as I am sure, from the account I heard of his character, he is with books of science and general literature, he would have found that this word "*now*" is a favourite word in the Inspired Writings: he would have found that it occurs oftener in the Bible than in the prayer-meeting. "Come *now* and let us reason together, saith the Lord." We read of "Save *now*, O Lord." "O Lord I beseech thee send *now* prosperity," says David. And we read of those who were sent forth to say, "Come, for all things are *now* ready." And again, says God, "*Now* is the accepted time: behold, *now* is the day of salvation." What! two *nows* in the same sentence? Perhaps that was more than occurred at the prayer-meeting. Then he might have read the text, "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have *now* received the atonement." My fellow sinners, do not your wants, do not your desires, do not your prayers, say "*now*?" Does not your Bible say "*now*?" Does not the Holy Ghost say "*now*?" Let then your faith say "*now*," and you shall (God grant you may!) you shall receive the atonement.

Then lastly, we that have realized this divine, life-giving, and heavenly religion, *will not wish to monopolize it ourselves*. What, monopoly in religion! Why monopoly in religion is the worst monopoly of all. Religion is not the less to *me* because *you* receive it also: the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not the less good news to *me* because it is also good news to *you*. The sun in the firmament is not less valuable to *me* because he gives light and heat to thousands of millions of *my fellows*, as well as myself: and if there be any difference *here* it will be in our favour: in *giving* we shall *receive*; in *blessing* we shall *be* blessed. Have you received the atonement, and proved its efficacy; and do you not wish your fellow men to receive it too? Do you "*joy in God*" on this behalf; and do you not wish the millions of the human family to rejoice with you? I am sure your Christian feelings prompt you to this. Therefore it is you are come here this morning in such numbers: and what a cheering and interesting spectacle do I behold! Such a number of human beings—such a number of blood-bought, deathless, human beings, who must exist for ever and ever, concerned to know, and love, and live the truth themselves, and concerned to make it known to others! Is not this a spectacle worthy of angels to behold? And do they not behold it? And if some poor sinner in this assembly has received the conviction that he is such, and is beginning to heave the sigh, and to shed

"The tear that from repentance flows,"

has not the angel who witnessed it carried up the glad-tidings; and is not the joy now circulating around the throne? And don't you wish to give angels joy? Don't you wish that your fellow-creatures may have joy? Then do all you can to send them that shall go and exhibit the great atonement, who shall take up this great gospel scheme, and hiding themselves behind it, not wishing

people to see them, and admire their eloquence their zeal, and their learning—hiding, like John the Baptist behind the great Victim, and crying out, “Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.” There are many willing to go, and there are multitudes willing to receive them, and waiting for them, and looking out for them, saying, “Come over and help us.” And what is our reply? Why, “We are coming; or, if we cannot come ourselves, we are willing to help those who can come.”

Are you weary in well-doing? Are you going to abandon the cause? Not you. You have put your hand to the plough; and are you going back? No; you are looking onward and upward. It is the interest of Christ, and therefore it is your interest.

But why speak I thus? Do I forget where I am? Do I forget before whom I stand? Have so many years gone by since the existence of the Society, when, with one or two exceptions, I have been permitted on those annual occasions to bear my humble testimony in behalf of this great cause, and have so often witnessed your liberality: and do I suspect you now? I do not: no surmise of the kind has any existence in this bosom. Your hearts are open, and your hands will be open too. Then “whatsoever your hand findeth you to do, do it with your might.”

## THE END OF LIFE.

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REV. J. A. JAMES.

SURREY CHAPEL, MAY 3, 1835.

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‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.’—MATTHEW, vi. 33.

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**RELIGION**—including its incumbent duties and its inestimable privileges—is the great end of life. I repeat the expression, and then make a momentary pause, that you may take in, and revolve, the entire subject of the evening’s discourse: Religion is the great end of life.

To illustrate and sustain this proposition is my aim on the present occasion. It is infinitely momentous, and it pertains to us all. There is, there *can* be but one supreme end of existence. If we miss or mistake this, we shall have lived in vain; and as life is continually drawing to a close, and *may* close at any future moment, it discovers brutish ignorance, or brutish apathy, or both, never to stop, as we are hurrying through existence, to ask the questions, “What am I? Whence did I come? Whither am I going? What is the design of God in sending me into the world? What is to be my destiny when I go home?” And yet how many are there that never ask these questions! Some are sauntering away existence; others are entirely mistaking the design of it; for Religion is the great end of life.

I will explain the terms of this proposition. I say the *great* end of life; for there are many subordinate and inferior ones. It is the design of God in sending us here that we should keep up society and improvement; that we should provide for our own comfort during our sojourn in the present world, and for the comfort of our families. These are ends, and legitimate ends of life; but they are not the supreme purpose of God in creating us. This is announced in the text: “Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness”—the blessings of the Christian dispensation bestowed by God in a way of righteousness. Seek these first as the objects of greatest importance—as those which are to be supreme in your desires, pursuits, and engagements.

Religion, I say, is the great end of life. By *religion* I do not mean the adoption of a creed, however orthodox; nor the performance of a round of ceremonies, however scriptural, decent, and proper. By *religion* I mean a supreme, habitual, practical regard to the Word of God as the foundation of our hope as sinners, the rule of our conduct as creatures and as Christians; an habitual living in the fear of God, the love of Christ, and the hope of heaven; a life of “repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ”—a life of holiness, and prayer, and watchfulness, and benevolence. Such a religion is the great end of life.



I shall sustain this proposition by the four following proofs: the testimony of Scripture; the revealed design of God in all his dispensations towards men; the nature of religion; and the brevity of human life, in connexion with the life that is to come.

In the first place, I prove this proposition by reference to **THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE.**

It is scarcely needed to quote particular passages; the whole Bible supports the sentiment. The Word of God stands at the very centre of human society and human affairs, to correct the mistakes, to reprove the follies, and to guide the conduct of mankind in reference to the life that is to come. All its doctrines, all its precepts, all its promises, all its prospects, may be summed up in substance in the sentence which I have already frequently repeated: Religion is the end of life. The Bible is a heaven-kindled beacon, to guide the voyagers over the stormy ocean of human life to the haven of eternal rest. It is placed on the high road to another world, to direct its travellers, and bears this inscription as its finger points to eternity—"TO IMMORTALITY." It is ever saying to the children of men, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." The man who for a moment doubts whether the supreme end of existence be vital godliness, places himself in direct opposition to the testimony of Scripture, and does not so much *mistake* it, as *contradict* it.

But perhaps many will be struck more with particular passages than with the substance of the whole. Take, then, the text: what can be more explicit? This is the language of Christ: "Seek ye first," as that which is of most importance, as that which should be most desired, as that which you should be most anxious to possess, as that without possessing which you should feel that you are poor, or in the possession of which you should account yourselves rich, though you had nothing else: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

The context is equally explicit. In the nineteenth verse we read thus: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." This language is not intended to stop the current of human affairs, to paralyze the arm of industry, to abstract man altogether from his connexion with society, to enclose him within the walls of a convent or a monastery; but it is intended to teach him that every thing earthly is to be subordinate to that which is heavenly; that all things temporal are inferior to those which are eternal; that Religion is the one great end of life.

In the latter part of the chapter our Lord tells us to "take no thought"—no anxious thought, no supreme solicitude, about what we are to eat, or drink, or wear. Not that these things are to be utterly and entirely banished from the human mind, but they are all to be brought into subjection to higher and nobler pursuits. We find in the Gospel of John this language: "Labour not

for the meat which perisheth;" that is, Labour not *so much* for the meat which perisheth; "but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." The Apostle Paul teaches us the same lesson when he says, "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek"—as the end of life—"for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." Our Lord's words on another occasion are equally important: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" We are in another place admonished, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do it all to the glory of God:" "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth:" "Look not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal." Certainly as God knows the end for which he sent us into the world, and as he has thus so explicitly made known that end, we are guilty of a contempt of divine authority if there be one single object, however important in other respects it may be, that we set above religion, and those blessings which are included in it, and insuperably connected with it.

Secondly, I support this proposition by reference to **THE REVEALED DESIGN OF GOD** in all his dispensations toward the human race.

For what purpose has God created this world? Not to be our abiding place, not to be our inheritance, not to be our perpetual possession. It is only a place of transit, where we have no continuing city, and are not permitted long to abide—through which we are passing to some other world beyond it. What is the design of all the dispensations of Divine Providence? If he give us prosperity, it is not to rivet our affections to the world; it is only to remind us of the goodness of Jehovah, and how much better blessings there are that he is waiting to bestow if we ask him in the right way. If he should place us in adversity, it is not to sport with our distress, it is not to take pleasure in our affliction; but it is to wean us from the present state, to lead us to seek that sorrowless world which he has promised to them that love him.

But I especially refer you to his great work, the work of redemption—to the incarnation, sufferings, and death of his Son. Upon the summit of the cross may we read this inscription in legible and bright characters, "Religion is the great end of man:" for "God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Son of God became not incarnate—gave not his tears, his blood, his life, his death, for objects so mean, so comparatively insignificant as wealth, as fame, as literature, as science, as pleasure. No; the agonies, the tears, the blood of the Son of God, were given for the salvation of the soul, that man should be a partaker of true religion; that we should be brought to repentance towards God, and faith in Him who is able to save to the uttermost. The cross is the exponent of God's designs towards us: and that man alone can be in harmony with God in the end of his existence, who is making the salvation of his soul through faith in Jesus, the great purpose of life. This is the only way in which he can be brought into fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. The man who opposes, by the habit of his life, the career of his conduct, the design of the Son of God in coming into our world, that man is defeating the end of his existence; he cannot be agreed with God; he

is not of one mind with Jehovah: he is living for some other purpose than that for which God gave his Son to die upon the cross.

Thirdly, I prove that religion is the great end of life, by a reference to the NATURE OF RELIGION ITSELF. Whatever be the end of life, it must, I think, be admitted by all to have the following properties.

In the first place, it must be *transcendently excellent*. The great, and wise, and good God, would never propose to us as the purpose of our coming into this world, and living in it, that which was mean and inconsiderable. Examine the nature of religion; what is it? The knowledge, the love, and the enjoyment of the Infinite God himself in all his attributes: the union of the soul with the Lord Jesus Christ, and the participation of that fulness which was treasured up in him, for the redemption of the world: the reception, and the impress of eternal and invariable truth: the enjoyment of the chief good, the practice of the highest virtue: the foretaste of heaven, the pledge of immortality: the image of Jehovah stamped upon the mind: the Spirit of Jesus Christ dwelling in the breast; and all the holy dispositions of the angelic host forming the character. This is religion. What is wealth, what is fame, what is literature, compared with this? What, but dim and smoking tapers, held up amidst the blaze of the noon-day sun: empty bubbles, compared with a fountain of clear and crystal water. How less than nothing and vanity do all these things appear, put in competition with religion!

Secondly, that which is the great end of life must not only be transcendently excellent, but it must be also *absolutely certain in its attainment, if sought in the right way*. Will this apply to any thing short of true godliness? Can skill the most consummate, and industry the most unwearied, always command wealth? Can the competitor for fame always ensure the envied palm? Can the votary of pleasure calculate with certainty on the means and opportunities of gratification? Can the humble aspirant after domestic enjoyment always bar the door against poverty, disease, and death? Does not uncertainty characterize every thing earthly? Where one succeeds do not many fail? Is not the precarious nature of every thing earthly and every thing human proverbial? Are we then to be mocked with shadows—condemned to the pursuit of phantoms? Can that be the end of existence which sought with ever so much industry we cannot be certain of obtaining? No.

But now, my hearers, think of religion. Whoever sought this, and sought it in God's way of bestowing the blessing, and sought it in vain? O, it is delightful, that here, where it is of most importance, all uncertainty should be excluded—that here is certainty. When the trembling jailor at Philippi crouched at the feet of his prisoners, and in the anguish of his mind uttered that important question, "What shall I do to be saved?" what was the answer given by these heaven-commissioned, heaven-inspired men? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and"—*possibly* "thou mayest be saved?" *Probably* "thou mayest be saved?" No; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." There is a glory in that little insignificant monosyllable "shalt," which is not to be found throughout the whole range of human pursuits and earthly objects, as attaching to them. It is the glory of the Gospel that there is certainty. As true as God is in heaven, as certainly as the Saviour

died upon the cross, as certainly shall that man be saved, who with penitence and faith, looketh to the Lord Jesus Christ for the pardon of his sins, and the eternal happiness of his soul. Well, then, here is another proof that religion must be the end of life—its absolute certainty.

But then I advance to the third position, and that is, whatever is the end of life must be *satisfying in its nature*, as well as excellent and certain of attainment. And now we test all the various objects which multitudes are preferring to religion; and we put the question, Do they satisfy? We first apply the test to *riches*. Do these content the mind, and leave it nothing higher, nothing further to wish? Is the rich man the happiest of his species? On the contrary, is it not proverbial, that “a man’s life,”—that is the happiness of his existence—“consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he hath?” O think of the labour of getting money; the anxiety that is mixed with all the pursuits by which it is got; the fear of losing it; the care of investing it. What deductions these from the pleasures of wealth!

Does *fame* satisfy? What a fever does ambition keep the soul perpetually in! How restless is the man to attain his object: how jealous of those just behind him; how envious of those just before him: how tormenting until he can grasp the prize; and then how soon does the verdure of the crown fade, and it becomes useless! How many have responded to the plaudits of admiring multitudes with the sigh of a bursting heart, and the groans of a wounded spirit! How generally has it been the case, that those who have risen to the very pinnacle of notoriety, have been followed there by some cloud of sorrow or reproach, that has obscured their glory and thrown a dark shadow upon the dazzling scene around them!

Does *pleasure* satisfy? Is the sensualist happy—the man of appetite, and illicit enjoyment, and forbidden gratification? Poor wretch! I am only tormenting thee in putting the question: thou, like other slaves, dost groan beneath thy shackles—a diseased body, a wounded conscience, a troubled spirit, a blighted reputation, a beclouded prospect. Ah, the cost at which thou hast bought thy pleasures!

Is the gay votary of *fashion* happy? Why then does she flutter round the circle, ever changing her enjoyments? O the weariness of the interval between pleasure and pleasure to her!

Does *learning*, does *science* satisfy? “Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.”

Does *domestic comfort* satisfy?—and this is the purest earthly pleasure that we can have—but does it satisfy? O how many interruptions there are in the happiest home: how many things which remind the man that he needs something higher, and something better!

Well, then, now we will put the question to religion: Does *religion* satisfy? O how many, did the decorum of public worship allow—how many could I call up in this place who would unite in their testimony, and say, “We were never happy till we were brought to the cross: we never found satisfaction till we obtained grace to believe in Jesus, and sought the salvation of our souls.” I do not, my hearers, mean to say, that religion in the present life makes us absolutely perfect in happiness. It is a *begun* happiness; not a *perfect* one: but it is a *real* happiness; not the mere mockery of enjoyment: it is *happiness*, not



*amusement* ; and there is a wide difference between the two. Amusement means nothing more than something to gratify the imagination or the taste : but happiness means that which gratifies the heart, under the approbation of the conscience ; and nothing but religion can do this. See what religion does ; how it removes the principal sources of human disquietude—the burden of guilt, the turbulence of depravity, the bondage of death, the tormenting fear of God. True religion takes away all these. See what it brings in their place : justification, peace with God, a new heart, peace of conscience, peace that passeth understanding, adoption into the family of God, the witness of the Spirit that we are the children of God, consolations that are neither few nor small, and the hope of eternal life. If there be happiness any where it is here : and if the man who possesses religion be not himself happy, it is not because there is not enough in religion to make him so ; but because there is some obstruction in him to the full occupancy of his soul to the heavenly gift. Religion will be with you through life, and in death. It will cheer you in solitude, preserve you in difficulties, protect you in danger, comfort you in tribulation, sustain you in the loss of every thing else, go with you into the chamber of sickness, lie down with you on the bed of death, rise with you in the realms of immortality, and be your portion for ever. Here, then, must be the end of life, when it can do all this.

There is one more property that I must mention to shew that religion is the great end of life. Whatever is so, must be *in harmony with all the legitimate ends of existence*, and rather help them than hinder them. This will apply to religion. Is it lawful for a man to seek health ? It will guard him from the pursuits that destroy it. Is it lawful for a man to seek the good things of the present world, or by honest means to accumulate wealth ? Religion will cut off those things that destroy prosperity, and those which have a tendency to lessen it. In every view, therefore, that we can take, “godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

I now advance to the fourth and last proof that Religion is the great end of man ; and that is **THE BREVITY OF HUMAN LIFE IN CONNEXION WITH THE LIFE THAT IS TO COME.**

During the continuance of the antediluvian world man's existence ran on to the length of nine, and almost ten centuries ; but *now* he steps from the cradle to the coffin ; he fleeth like a shadow, and continueth not ; brief and uncertain is his abode in the present world. “The days of our years are three-score years and ten ; and if by reason of strength they be four-score years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow ; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” “It is appointed to all men once to die ;” our days are numbered ; our sands are running out, and, in the case of some of you, but a very few of them may remain in the glass ; you have come here in health, but you may return to die.

But does man's history end here ? No : “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after death the judgment.” There is another and an eternal world ; we are born for eternity ; there is a principle of immortality in our nature. We may change the place, the mode of existence ; but in existence we must for ever and ever remain. We cannot go out of being if we would ; a man may

destroy his natural life by the various means of self-destruction ; but this is not to terminate his being ; he goes into another world, where millions and millions and millions of ages will take nothing from his existence ; millions and millions and millions more will follow, but he is still in being ; and millions in endless succession are still to come, and still the man is found in existence.

My dear hearers, is this true ? Do you believe this ? Then how obvious it is at once, without any process of reasoning—the mere statement carries its own proof with it—that that must be the end of life which prepares for happiness beyond the grave, and nothing that can merely comfort or amuse us while here. If we are to live for ever in another world (and we can live only a very short time in this world), then it is obvious as the plainest axiom, that that, whatever it be, which prepares us for our eternal existence, must be the end of our present life, and not the things which have relation merely to this life.

Again let us try each of these various objects that I have brought before you.

Can *riches* be the end of life—that is, viewing our existence beyond the grave ? What have riches to do with another world ? We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out : naked came we into this world, and naked shall we go out of it again. We may amass wealth by success in business, by receiving the patrimony of those who have gone before us : but can we carry it into eternity with us ? and if we could, would it be of any service there ? Not a farthing can we take with us ; we leave it all behind—riches have nothing to do with the future world.

Try we the objects of *ambition* : what have these to do with another world ? Can the hero—can the man who has distinguished himself in literature, or in science, carry his laurel with him into eternity ? What use would it be if he could ? Would he, or could he, gain respect there from holy beings for what he was on earth merely, as a hero, or a statesman, or a philosopher ? No.

Has *pleasure* any relation to another world ? I mean what is usually signified by that term—the gratifications of appetite, or sense, or taste, or imagination ? What relation have these to a future world ? “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven ; neither can corruption inherit incorruption.”

Has *domestic comfort*, connubial love, or the sweet endearments of home, any relation to, or any bearing upon, another world ? Not in themselves, abstractedly considered. In the resurrection we are neither married nor given in marriage : the ties that bind us here, and sweetly bind us, and which are the source of so much pure and innocent enjoyment, dissolve by the touch of death ; and beyond that moment we are known no more to each other as husband and wife, parent and child, brothers and sisters ; although it is probable we may recognize each other in a future state. Well, then, all these things have not any connexion, have not any bearing upon our state in the world to come.

Has *religion* ? It is its great design. Religion is the only thing that can prepare us for a future world, the only thing that we carry with us into eternity—except our sins, if we die with them unpardoned. Nothing else that we possess can have any bearing on our future state.

Suppose that a month hence you were to embark for a foreign land, never more to return to your own country : what would be, what *should* be evidently the end of all your conduct, all your desires, during that short month that you

were to spend on the British soil? To sow a few vernal seeds in your garden? To decorate the home you are about to leave? Why, of what use would that be to you in that foreign land to which you are going? If, forgetful of your voyage, forgetful of the land to which that voyage was to conduct you, you spent all your time about the objects which were so soon to cease in their importance to you, would not your friends step in, and remonstrate with you on your folly? Would they not remind you that you should prepare for your voyage—that you should prepare for the country to which you are going?

Suppose the case of a criminal condemned to die. His prince gives him a respite for a month, to afford him an opportunity of seeking that he might obtain the exercise of the royal clemency. Imagine that this poor creature, instead of employing the only month during which he could gain a protraction of existence, and avert an ignominious death, were to expend all his time in decorating his prison walls, or in some game of chance or skill, or making some improvement in his worldly affairs. O, would not many step in and say, “Thou fool! dost thou forget that in one short month thou wilt be a felon suspended from the gallows, unless thou art diligent in seeking to the fountain of mercy for life, and to be restored to the immunities and privileges of a citizen, a living man?”

But, my hearers, neither one, nor both these, are a thousandth part guilty of the folly of those who, though they know—or, at least, profess to know—that they are going to eternity, and may go at any future moment of their existence, are wholly taken up in seeking the things that are temporal, regardless of the things which are eternal—wholly taken up about the land that they may leave at any moment, and forgetful of that in which they must live for millions, and millions, and millions of ages. I put it to you, then, Is not religion the great end of life?

I infer from this subject, first, if this be true, that, however long a man may live, or whatever he may gain, or whatever misfortunes he may avert during that time, *if he neglect religion he has lost the great end of existence.* He may raise, and apportion, and settle respectably in life, a large family: he may be successful in trade, and amass a large fortune: he may secure the respect of his neighbours for amiable conduct, and a kind, and generous, and benevolent disposition: he may be a patriot to his country—he may, in some respects, be a philanthropist to the world: but if he has neglected “repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,” and the regeneration of the heart by the Holy Spirit—viewing him as immortal, that man has lived and died in vain; all the time that he has spent is lost. For the true idea of time is, space for repentance, preparation for eternity. The value of time is derived from its connexion with eternity; and he that is not improving his time by preparing for eternity, is squandering away, upon trifles absolutely insignificant, the time which God has given him to secure the salvation of his immortal soul. Not only has he lost his *time*, but he has lost his *labour*. He may have been very busy; he may never have been idle; he may receive the congratulation of neighbours around him that he has been singularly successful; he may be looked upon as a man who has secured the fruit of his labour to the greatest extent: I tell you, that viewing that man in the light of revelation, in con-

nexion with eternity, as possessing an immortal soul, lost in sin but recoverable by faith, he has lived in vain. Not only has he lost his time and his labour, but he has spent his time *in ruining himself*. He has gone down to the grave rich; he has been the object of admiration and envy to multitudes: but as to his soul, he has neglected his salvation, and ruined himself as an immortal creature. This is not all. Though he is congratulated as a successful man, as a wise man, he has acted as a madman; he has unmanned himself; he has acted below and against his reason; for reason would have taught him that the great end of life is to prepare men for eternity; and whatever a man gains, if he neglects religion he has lost his soul.

I infer, secondly, However early a person may go to the grave—whatever he may leave behind, yet, *if he be a partaker of true religion, he has answered the great end of his existence*. Oftentimes we see a youth, well-educated, amiable in disposition, of considerable acquirements, of splendid genius, the hope of his friends, the rich blossom of society, just when he is stepping into existence cut off by the stroke of death. “O,” say multitudes, “he has lived in vain.” No: he lived long enough to be a Christian; he remembered his Creator in the days of his youth; he was a child of God: the end of his existence was answered.

Sometimes we see a lovely female, just placed at the head of a domestic establishment—the grace, the charm, the ornament of her circle, who, in that moment most interesting in female existence, gives life and loses her own. How many are ready to say, “She has lived in vain.” No: she feared God: she has gone away from much that was attractive; she has left behind much that tied her to life: but she has gone to a richer possession beyond the grave: the end of life is answered.

Then here is a third case: A man who set out in life with fair prospects, with every hope that he would rise to prosperity. His industry fails; misfortune after misfortune overtakes him; he sits down amid the wreck of a broken fortune, and pours out the language of his heart in the language of Solomon, “Vanity of vanities! all is vanity:” with a broken constitution he goes to the grave. Has he lived in vain? No: he was a Christian; amidst all he was the child of God; he had an interest in the blessings of salvation: the end of existence was answered.

I take a fourth case. Here is a poor man, unknown to fortune and to fame: he spends his life in utter obscurity; he gets his bread by an occupation so insignificant as perpetually sawing pieces of wood, or sniting upon a piece of iron, or filing some other metal. Thus his life passes; he dies, and is forgotten. Has he lived in vain? No: for he was a child of God; he had religion; he sought “first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” Delightful! How it rescues the poor from insignificance! What dignity it attaches to them! *They* too can prepare for eternity; *they* too can have religion: the cottage is as friendly to piety as the mansion—perhaps more so. They lived not in vain; they sought “first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”

I make a third inference. If this be true, then the greater part of mankind, as to the happiness of another world, the greater part of mankind are *losing* the great end of their existence. There is something in this more painful than language can describe. But is it not true? Look around you—you can tell.



Do the multitude make religion the supreme end of life? On the contrary, it is the least, the mere Sabbath-day's concern, having no connexion with the character, no connexion with the heart. Generation after generation is rising up and going off the stage of existence, without so far as they are concerned, securing the great purpose of life—the salvation of the soul. What makes this the more melancholy is, that they have the Word of God in their hands, which all the while has been reminding them to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” And that which forms the very climax of this is, that they make the mistake irretrievably. Not one of all the multitudes that go out of existence in this way will be able to say, “I have made a mistake; I will go back and correct it: I will spend life in a different manner.”

I conclude with addresses to different classes of characters.

*First: young people.* Life is before you; you are just setting out; you are laying your plans; selecting your pursuits, fixing upon your objects. For your soul's sake do not leave out religion. Begin life, writing, by the grace of God, upon your heart, the sentiment which has been the subject of the evening's discourse: religion is the end of life. Take the preacher's advice, and see if, when the end of life is come—whether early or late—you repent taking that advice.

*You who are engaged in the busy concerns of life*, thinking highly of wealth, or fame, or the various objects which present themselves to your attention, remember, though careful and troubled about many things, one thing is needful.

*Aged people*, whose days are almost spent, whose life is dwindled to a very narrow span—with whom it is the eleventh hour, and that eleventh hour half or three quarters gone; aged people, let me ask you for what end you live. Is it for religion? “O,” says an old grey-headed man, perhaps startled from his slumber to-night, amazed at the idea that three-score years and ten, or nearly four-score years have gone by, without his accomplishing the purpose for which they were given. “O,” says such a man, “I am ruined, I am lost.” Not yet, not yet: you may have lived in vain hitherto; but that quarter of an hour of the eleventh and last of thine existence, by the mercy of God, by the rich and sovereign grace of Jehovah, may be in thy case enough in death to secure the end of existence. Thou, thus late in the evening, thou, after this unprofitable day, thou art yet within the reach of mercy. God waits to be gracious; go to-night, with faith and repentance, to the foot of the cross; and then, in the righteousness of pardoned sin, a renewed heart, the hope of heaven, thou shalt close even thine existence with this delightful idea, “Life with me has not even yet been lost.”

Christians, *real Christians*, I congratulate you on the blessings you have received. Blessed man! Child of God, heir of immortality, expectant of eternal life and glory, thou hast not lived in vain. God is *thy* God; Christ is *thy* Saviour; heaven is thy home. It matters little what awaits thee on earth. Be tranquil. Thou mayest lose thy property, and never recover it; thou mayest die soon; but the end of life is accomplished: by the grace of God thou hast secured the purpose of thine existence; and let death come when, how it may, thou mayest meet it as good old Simeon met the infant Saviour, and smilingly exclaim, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

## THE LEPERS OF SAMARIA.

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REV. J. SHERMAN,

POULTRY CHAPEL, MAY 7, 1835 \*.

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“Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.”—2 KINGS, vii. 9.

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THE circumstances which dictated this brief conversation were the following. Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, with a numerous army, had besieged Samaria, the capital of the kingdom of Israel. It appears that the siege was continued so long, and under such distressing circumstances, that the most awful consequences began to rage in the city. Such was the high price of all kinds of provisions, that as much as ten pounds were given for an ass's head, unwholesome, unsavoury food; and a pint of corn, taken from the crops of doves collected from the neighbouring country, was sold at the rate of twelve shillings a pint. Hunger had so blunted the sympathies of nature, that mothers had killed and eaten their own children; and the resources of the city were now in such a dreadfully exhausted state, that an entire surrender, or total destruction, must be the necessary sad consequences.

Jehoram, instead of reproving himself for his own wickedness, and confessing to himself privately that he was the great cause of all the miseries which Samaria was now enduring, laid the fault upon Elisha, the most patriotic friend the country had; and he determined therefore to kill him. For this purpose he went to his house; and previous to the execution of that purpose he determined to hear the prophet for himself. Uttering some impious, abominable, and blasphemous expression, he was induced to delay his design till the next morning, on account of a prophecy which Elisha delivered, contained in the two first verses of this chapter. “Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flower be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.”

In the afternoon of the same day, four leprous men suggested to one another the expedient of going out to the camp of the Syrians, and seeing what had become of the army, or what was the state of the Syrian's force. They were

outcasts from society; they were devoured by the leprosy; they were under the ban and curse of God and man: and therefore any thing that happened to them, they thought could not make them worse. And, therefore, "they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die." As soon as it began to grow dark they commenced their operations, proceeding on their journey; and, to their great astonishment, when they arrived at the camp, they found no man there: for the Lord had gone out before them, and caused the Syrians "to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said"—that is the Syrians—"one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life." When they had satisfied themselves, by going to the extreme end of the camp, that it was not a stratagem of the enemy, they then went, first into one tent, and partook of the luxuries of life that the Syrians had left behind; and entered another, and took of the gold and silver, and concealed it in the earth. And after they had thus satisfied themselves, they began to think of their friends: "We have been into the Syrians' camp, and we have now got their money, and we have had their food; our spirits are refreshed, and our bodies are nourished, by that of which we have partaken; but there are our poor brethren in the city; there are our wives, and our children there, and there are vast numbers there dying of hunger. We do not well to sit here: this day is a day of good tidings; we have reaped the advantage of coming out; we have partaken of the bounty of God in this extraordinary way: if we tarry until the morning light, and be so ungrateful to divine Providence for the blessings that are conferred upon us, some mischief will befall us. Come, let us rise up and go into the city, and tell the king's household the good things of which we have partaken."

My Christian brethren, the present state of the world is, in a spiritual sense, somewhat similar to that in which Samaria was placed when these lepers uttered these words. The armies of Satan and of sin surround it; the people, by millions, are perishing for lack of knowledge: God has blessed a variety of individuals by his rich providence, with a foretaste of the rich provision of grace and mercy, which makes happiness abound on earth, and fits souls for everlasting glory. Thousands are every day perishing for lack of knowledge; and millions more must perish, if the bread of life be not sent. Now we, like the favoured lepers, have found out a plentiful supply to enrich ourselves, and feast the world. Thanks be to God that some few efforts have been made to supply the world with this provision! But their wants are infinitely beyond all the supplies we have sent them. Millions are crying, and are praying for this bread of life: and not only millions of the *heathen*, whose case is constantly presented to our view, but millions of *our own brethren*, in villages, and hamlets, and towns of your own country, with your own blood running in their veins, where many of your relatives dwell; where some of you have friends, servants, children, relations residing And these dark parts of the earth,

though not like the habitations of cruelty in the heathen world, are yet full of vice, and misery, and ignorance, to almost an unbounded extent: and the object of my standing before you this evening, is to “provoke you to love and to good works;” and to endeavour to “stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance,” to exhort you to “add to your faith virtue,” and to your virtue still greater liberality than you have been accustomed to shew, to this great and necessitous cause which now presents its claims to your notice. And may I especially, in entering upon the subject this evening, beg the prayers of this congregation, that I may be so assisted in laying its claims before you, that your hearts may be opened and expanded, and Christ’s name be honoured and glorified this evening.

The text, then, describes the times in which we live: “This day is a day of good tidings.” The text reproves our indifference to the miseries of others: “We do not well.” The text pronounces our punishment if we delay to send them help. And the text suggests the method which we ought immediately to pursue.

First, then, the text describes, THE TIMES IN WHICH WE LIVE. “This day is a day of good tidings.”

And is it not, my dear brethren and sisters, a day of good tidings? What are the peculiarities of the day in which we are called to live? There are these four peculiarities in it; the first of which I will now mention:—that *Jesus Christ has obtained a complete conquest over all our enemies*. And this is the great and especial truth which is published in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Sin, and the world, and Satan, like a mighty army, with all their leagued friends, were arrayed against us. The justice of God which we had offended, appeared in dreadful majesty against us; and until satisfaction was made to divine justice, mercy itself could not spare or pardon. The wrath of God was revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and all unrighteousness of men; and all our sad expectation consisted in tribulation and anguish, misery and woe, which were ready to fall upon our heads. Now we had to engage these hosts; we had to go out against them, these armies which surrounded us as they did Samaria. We had no champion, we had no individual who could protect our cause; no army went out against them. Like Samaria, beloved, when we beheld our condition, we were all alarm and all dismay: and, as in the case of Samaria, the victory was wholly of heaven, so it is in our case: Jesus, from the height of the throne of his majesty beheld us; pity moved him to compassionate our case; love, which had heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, unknown, and which passeth knowledge, brought him from heaven to earth in our flesh. In that flesh he dwelt for thirty-three years in our world, in the form of a servant; and as the Captain of our salvation, single-handed and alone, he entered the bloody field; and sin and hell opposed all its force against him. The wrath of God seized and fell upon him, in all its awful majesty: justice demanded of him the debt which we had contracted; and the law poured forth all its curses upon his head. He engaged in the mighty conflict: and, as smoke is driven away, so he drove them away. Our God arose, and he scattered all his enemies. It is true that Christ in this conflict died; but in dying he “destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, and delivered us, who through fear of death were



all our life-time subject to bondage." It is true that he died ; but in dying he " put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself." It is true that he died ; but he proclaimed the victory with his dying breath—" It is finished : " " Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." It is true, friends, that he died ;

" But justice quenched its flaming sword,  
In Jesu's vital blood ;"

and the law was magnified, justice was satisfied, God was well pleased, and sinners were saved. And now the host of heaven, and the Church of Christ, may sing " Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah ! the work is done ; the conquest is made, salvation is brought in ; and the blessings which were so much needed for my soul, are already to be procured, to be bestowed, through his dying atonement." So that " this is a day of good tidings."

Moreover, " this is a day of good tidings," because *Jesus Christ has procured an ample provision for all our necessities.* The *spoil* is ours ; the *glory* is his. The conquest was made by himself, and through that conquest all the benefits of salvation are now amply provided and amply presented to our use. And what are these blessings ? My brethren, our enemies had robbed us of peace, of joy, of communion, of justification, of holiness, and of heaven : but this day is " a day of good tidings ;" Jesus Christ has restored that which he took not away. Whatever scarlet and crimson sins have been committed, in the Gospel he has presented a full, and free, and everlasting pardon. If pride, and passion, and prejudice had corrupted the soul, and become its grief, in the Gospel is presented a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. If condemnation arise from the law, to terrify the spirit that knows not how to justify himself before God, Christ in the Gospel has presented him with a righteousness that is " unto all and upon all them that believe ;" for there is no difference. If hostility to God and his service be the plague of the man's heart, and oppose the message he constantly hears, Christ has brought and has preached tranquillity ; for " we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." If heaven be desirable, and its glories be coveted, and the hope of attaining it be lost to any spirit here ; " this is a day of good tidings," my hearers, for the way to the holiest of all is made manifest, through the rent-veil of the Redeemer's flesh. Beloved, the Gospel is a table spread, where all the spiritual wants of sinners may be supplied : here, in abundance are found, the bread of life, the water of life, the fruits of the tree of life, and all other blessings connected with life eternal. And may I ask this vast congregation this evening, Have you, dear hearers, satisfied yourselves at this table ? Is there any unconverted spirit here, who yet convicted of its own guilt, is earnestly desirous of the blessings which the Gospel imparts ? This is a *Home Missionary Society* ; and we are about to plead for *home* ; and where can I better plead than here, dear hearers, and tell you the Gospel is for you, and the blessings of the Gospel are for you, and the ample provisions of boundless grace do invite you, do welcome you, to come and partake of them largely !

" O all ye hungry, starving poor  
Behold the royal feast,  
And let your longing appetites  
The rich provision taste."

" This day is a day of good tidings : " I am sent on a message from the bounty-

ful Provider of this feast : "Come, for all things are now ready." See, my dear hearers, the Master is at the table ; the provisions are spread ; the guests are seated ; but Mary's place is empty ; Lazarus is not one of them that sit at the table with him ; John is not yet amongst his disciples. Have not you, my young friends, who hear me this evening, been the burthen of your mother's prayers and hopes, and your father's expectations for years that are passed ? Come to this blessed provision ; this is "a day of good tidings" for you ; when you are heartily welcome to all the boundless grace of the great Provider.

But there is another point connected with this good tidings, and that is this : that *Jesus Christ has led many of us who are present to participate in the provisions of his love.* And this makes it "a day of good tidings" to us. Blessed for ever be his holy name, that not a few of us have tasted that he is gracious, and that we can put our hands to our heart, and say, that the ample provisions of his love have not only satisfied, but done more for us than we could ask or think. We take up the language of Scripture : we delight to know that "we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." We know that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." "We know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him against that day." "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true ; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." We know that his "flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed." We "know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich." "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is." Now how came we in this happy state ? How came we feelingly and experimentally to know these heavenly truths ? O "not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."

Beloved, the four leprous men exemplify our condition. Like them, we were cast out of the congregation of the saints : like them we were loathsome in our own eyes : like them, we were infectious to our neighbours : like them, we were under the ban and curse of God ; but, like these leprous men, he filled us with views of our own misery, made us discontented with the state in which we were, raised a spark of hope in our bosoms, that for us there might be hope, and that we might, as we could not be in a worse condition, be better, by application to his mercy and grace. And you who hear me this evening, recollect that the day in which we live must necessarily be "a day of good tidings." Who brought you to London ? Who placed you in such a situation ? Who fixed you, young man, in that counting-house, where the first sermon you heard should be made evidently the power of God to your salvation ? O methinks I see your mother, taking her last farewell of you ; and as you went away from the door, she lifted up her voice and she said, "God bless thee, my son, and make the God of thy father the God of thy life." And God has answered that prayer ; and this is "a day of good tidings" to you. O it was He, who by the operation of his Spirit, applied divinely to your heart : it was He who brought you to listen to its voice : it was He who ordered the visit of that friend ; who put that book into your hand ; who suggested the visit to such a house, or such a family ~

such a temple for his worship, and there made the Gospel instrumental to your everlasting good.

Now, I say, behold the change ; you who were once leprous souls are become rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom : you are satisfied with marrow and fatness ; and your mouth praises him with joyful lips : you who were afar off are brought nigh by the blood of Jesus Christ : and though the day may be distant, yet cleansed, exalted, justified, and glorified, you shall one day arise to the place where he is, and see him, and be like him, and be with him, and shall change your lamentations for hallelujahs, your pilgrim's staff for the palm-branch of victory, and all your distresses for everlasting pleasures. O " this day is a day of good tidings." " Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us bless his holy name."

But, my brethren, there is another point connected with the day in which we live—that *Jesus Christ has opened channels for the publication of these good tidings to others*. This day may be emphatically called, indeed, " a day of good tidings." Will you indulge me, my dear hearers, by reflecting a moment on the contrast of this day and the days that have preceded us ; and let us see whether this day be not " a day of good tidings." Formerly the Scriptures were not completed ; now the canon of inspiration is closed. Formerly the Scriptures were not translated ; now we have the Bible, not only closed as it respects the canon, but we have it translated in our own and numbers of other languages. Formerly the saints looked forward for a Saviour to come ; we behold him arrived : for an atonement to be made ; we behold it finished : for a righteousness to be wrought out ; we behold it brought in. Formerly, my brethren, what impediments had the primitive disciples, in the publication of the Gospel, in the governments under which they lived ; our government, blessed be God, if it does not patronise, does not oppose ; and under the sanction of this government, we can carry our Gospel every where. Formerly, wherever it was preached, the exertions of our brethren were always impeded by desolation and war ; but now we are at peace ; there is no port shut against us ; missionaries may be sent to every place.

At this time God seems to be going forth, and shaking the very nations, stirring up the minds of men to an earnest desire for happiness ; a certain *something* they feel they want, a general buz and cry over the whole world for a certain something ; and although individuals may not know exactly what they want, yet there is a certain anxiety for the way that leads them to glory, happiness, and eternal life, which the Gospel so amply supplies. Now they are throwing off the shackles under which they are groaning, and are crying for Christ and the Gospel. Twenty years ago, the public press was the vehicle of slander against the saints, and against the Bible, and against Christ ; but now newspapers, with very few exceptions, are constrained to be the public and avowed advocates of the kingdom of Christ. The Missionary Society—I mean the London Missionary Society—the Bible Society, and the Tract Society, and others, which were begun with a handful of praying men in Mr. Hardcastle's counting-house, and rose in the world by little and little, like the cloud that the prophet saw, now rise majestically, like the sun, and are scattering light, salvation, joy, and peace, over the whole world. Again, the petty jealousies and distinctions amongst Christians, which so hindered and impeded

the work of conversion, are wonderfully softened down, so that they now seem to vie with each other who can do the most good, and who can most extend the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In our own land, light is spreading in every direction. The pulpits of the Established Church, which many years ago were not so filled as they now are, now we see are filling in every direction with wise, holy, zealous, devoted, and powerful men. The population of our country, which was formerly sunk in the grossness of ignorance and darkness, are now—with some exceptions which we shall afterwards show—are now placed in those situations by which they can attain to the knowledge of the truth, in hundreds of public places, from the servants of Christ. God is putting it into the hearts of wealthy men to erect places of worship. One in your own city has built perhaps as many as eleven or twelve; another has built one at Bristol: one is built at Weston-super-mare: and churches, too, without parliamentary grants, are erected by the munificence of individuals in various parts of the world, and the glorious Gospel of the blessed God is preached in these places. Notwithstanding the difficulties connected with all these things, we see that God is making this “a day of good tidings,” by opening channels, and granting facilities for the publication of his truth, which unquestionably never existed before. The days of the Countess of Huntingdon are in some respects revived again. She, from her own hearty desire, and love for the spread of the Gospel of Jesus, would now sell her jewels for the sake of building a chapel; and now strip her house at Ashby-de-la-Zouch of its furniture, in order that another house of God might be erected in another part, and the salvation of the Gospel of God made known to the sons of men.

My dear hearers; let it also be remembered, that notwithstanding the difficulties, and the sacrifices, and the distresses connected now with home and foreign labours, God is raising up both his servants and handmaidens, very willingly and joyfully to take this work. I cannot but also look at the immense improvement in our own land, as indicative of God's favour in this day. When Mr. Rowland Hill first commenced his exertions in country places, how different was the spirit and temper of the times. When he first went forth to preach the Gospel at Devizes, he told me that two individuals endeavoured to waylay him, and with an oath swore he should not preach the sermon that evening, and that they would take away his life: some singular circumstances attended his emancipation from their grasp. Persecution has ceased to a very great extent, and God is giving facilities in every direction for the publication of his truth. There is hardly, perhaps, a village or town in the whole kingdom, where the Gospel cannot, at this present time, make its way. These are facilities which we could not have expected or dreamed of thirty years ago.

And then, brethren, may I not say, that notwithstanding the difficulties of the times, and the pressure of the times, upon various individuals, yet is it not a marvellous thing, connected with the present day, that the subscriptions to the various societies increase; and, above all, that a greater spirit of prayer for the outpouring of the divine influence on the churches, and all the exertions connected with missionary and home labours, connected with the great work of God, should be more amply excited among the churches, is evidently a token for good. This day is indeed “a day of good tidings.” I bless God I was not born a century back; I thank God I have lived to see 1835; for it is “a



day of good tidings." It warms and cheers our hearts to see God going out before us causing a noise in the camp, and making the enemy fall before us, and making way for his servants to penetrate the dark recesses of the earth, and claim his people for himself.

I pass on, in the second place, to notice, that **THE TEXT REPROVES OUR INDIFFERENCE TO THE MISERIES OF OTHERS.** "We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings." This may appear a very strange connexion with the foregoing statements that I have made, brethren: but a very little explanation will, perhaps, alter your opinion. It is true that the Lord Jesus has graciously opened channels, and given facilities for the publication of his Gospel: but, beloved, is it equally true that we have embraced them? Will you allow me to put this question very seriously, beloved, to your consciences, and to my own conscience, this evening? Has the Lord Jesus gone out before us, and granted facilities for the publication of his truth, and have we embraced them? Have we seized these openings? Have we, as he has opened, entered into the breach, planted the standard, and claimed the territory for him? No; in many cases, this has not been done. Alas, my brethren, if every conscience brings the subject to bear upon itself, and proposes these questions to itself—"Have I seized the efficiencies which Christ has offered me to make known the bounties of his love to my kindred, to my neighbours, and to the world?" each of us must be condemned to-night. "Have I made any sacrifice commensurate with the object, or equal to the prospect that was open before me? Have I made Christ's kingdom my first, my earnest, my prime request?" Alas, brethren! we are all condemned. What have we endured, compared with Christ's sufferings for us? What have we given that we could not well spare? What have we ever made of sacrifice for the service of the Lord Jesus Christ? Beloved, we are all in the same condemnation; we are all convicted and condemned. We have satisfied ourselves with the precious provision of the Gospel; but, to a great extent, we have forgotten our perishing brethren. We have tasted, alas! the ease, and the comforts, and the luxuries of our own personal enjoyments, without remembering that our brethren were perishing for lack of knowledge.

Certainly, then, "we do not well." For, first, let it be remembered that *while this disposition exists in the mind, we dishonour our character.* What is our character? If we have believed in Christ, we are the sons of God; we are united to Christ, our Elder Brother, and we are under infinite obligations to his boundless love, inexpressible obligations to his gracious care and love to us. Now, all he asks us, in return for his love to us, is, to love him in return—not to be ashamed of him; to establish his kingdom, and to give ourselves up to his service. And who would think the terms hard that knew the blessedness of this Master's service? Who would even think that this proposition were too much to request of souls so deeply indebted to his love and to his mercy? To us, and to us only, he has deputed the honour of instrumentally bringing home to his fold our kindred and our countrymen. Beloved, our vows are upon us: we have opened our mouths to the Lord, and we cannot go back. All those of us, who are accustomed to visit the table of the Lord, remember our vows there. How oft our hearts have been deeply impressed with the love of the Lord Jesus, and we have said, as we have departed from his house, "I am the Lord's: my

time is his ; my talents are his ; my property is his : all that I have is his : my Beloved is mine, and I am his." And our prayers witness against us as much as our vows. We have said, "Thy kingdom come;" and did we mean it? Did we mean that his kingdom should come, when we so said? Yes, we meant that his kingdom should come; but without any great sacrifice on our part: or else we have slighted our prayer. If we withhold our persons, if we withhold our property, if we refuse to establish his kingdom in the earth, let us relinquish the name of Christian; it does not belong to us.

But, secondly, we not only dishonour our character, but *we disobey Christ's command*. Our prayers have been, "Lead me into thy truth, and teach me, for thou art the God of my salvation:" "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" has been our cry. Now this is his instruction: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, beginning at Jerusalem." Go tell the world my love, but begin at Jerusalem; begin at your own homes; begin where the people shed my precious blood; begin where the man lives that nailed me to the tree; begin where the soldier resides that pierced my side: let the virtue of my cross, and its salvation, be seen by those who were my murderers and my foes: that is, begin at Jerusalem, begin at home.

Now this is not an arbitrary command of the Eternal, my brethren, but a very necessary answer to your prayers, to your most earnest wish. You have prayed that his kingdom may come; and now he is opening his way, that his kingdom may come, for you to embrace the opportunities that will be the means of establishing that kingdom in the world. It is the very work in which you delight, according to your own profession in your best moments at the foot-stool of divine mercy, that you have earnestly desired every thing that has now happened; and then you have sung that hymn—

"Now will I tell to sinners round,  
What a dear Saviour I have found;  
I'll point to his redeeming blood,  
And say, Behold the way to God."

All this was perfectly sincere at the time; but it must be carried out to prove its sincerity. The command is our warrant; the promise is our encouragement: and if we live in disobedience to Christ's commands, how can we expect his blessing? "We do not well:" the text reproves our indifference. If our hearts say, we are too weak and unworthy to be engaged in the work, then I hear him saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is perfected in thy weakness." "By me," says the leper, "he saved Samaria," and "By me," the little captive maid, in her master's kitchen, was the means of saving her master's soul, and healing her master's body. "By me," the fishermen, and tax-gatherer converted thousands. And it is his pleasure still, to choose the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and the weak things of the world to bring to nought the things that are. Let, therefore, no hearts be discouraged in their village exertions, in their visitations around their districts, either with tracts, or with the opportunity in society round us—our friends, our neighbours, and the poor too, in speaking for Jesus Christ. You may not speak so eloquently as an Apollos; but if you can say one word for your Master, for the Prophet that is in Israel, as the little captive maid did; who can tell but that God may

give that word an efficacy and blessing, which the greatest efforts without his blessing would not effect?

There are especial and great encouragements resulting from such a thought as this, to an extended exertion. Where shall we find men for the purpose? This is the great, the last, the only question that we should ever propose to ourselves. The great question that commends itself to our especial notice is, What has Christ commanded? What is the work he would have us do? We are to go and labour, and leave the rest to him. Success is not ours; *labour* is ours. He has the gold and the silver in his possession; and as he raises up friends for different institutions, he manifestly proves that he has the hearts of all in his hands. O, dear Christian friends, there is a branch of liberality I want to see extended. I think I may say, that many of the Christian friends of the church "do not well." How many rich members have we, to whom it would be no sacrifice each to support a missionary? Christ's command is, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." "Why," says the rich and wealthy professor, the member of the Christian Church, "I cannot go." True, but then you can go by deputy; and why not have your deputy in a heathen land? Why not have your deputy at home? Why not have him circulating the knowledge of the Gospel around your city; in the village where you were born, and perpetuate the memory of Jesus Christ there, in the very place, where you yourself cannot go? May I beg to press this upon the attention of Christians? How much more noble, how much more durable, the monument would thus be after the decease of the individual, to have a man of God publishing Christ's salvation in the spot where, perhaps, that person was brought up—in poverty, perhaps, brought up; but who came to this great city, or went to other places, and God blessed him, and caused his riches to increase: how much better would it be to have a monument inscribing his name, and telling of deeds that few, perhaps, ever saw.

But I pass on to notice, in the next place, that **THE TEXT PRONOUNCES OUR PUNISHMENT IF WE DELAY.** "If we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will befall us." I will not detain you, my beloved, long in proving a point, which I believe you will all subscribe, that some mischief will certainly fall on the heads of those who, knowing their duty, do not fulfil it. It is not doubtful, it is not climerical: but it is plain, and certain, and awful. Yet I cannot suffer this opportunity to escape, brethren, without stirring up your minds by way of remembrance. Let me just, therefore, remark, that the Scriptures assure us, if we delay, three things shall befall us: first, our eyes shall see the destruction of our kindred; secondly, our souls shall want the joys of God's salvation; and thirdly, our conduct shall receive the condemnation of Christ.

If we delay this work *our eyes shall see the destruction of our kindred.* When our Beloved Lord had used all efforts to evangelize Jerusalem, by preaching, by miracles, by residing amongst them, by various conversations, and yet, after all their misery affected his heart; he could not look upon them without tears. Many times he wept in his prayers; but there are two scenes only recorded where he *publicly* wept: the one was at the grave of Lazarus, his dear friend; and the other was when he looked over Jerusalem, and saw the people perishing—people who had discarded the prophets that had been sent them. Now what

should our grief, beloved, be, to see souls brought every hour to the brink of hell, and know that, if they die, they must fall therein, and to reflect that we have used no adequate means to succour and save their souls! Do you believe it, my brethren, that there are *five millions* of your own countrymen, who either have not the means to attend public worship—that is, there are not places of worship for them to attend, or else they are not in the habit of hearing the Gospel at all? Do you believe that fact? If you do I will tell you this; that supposing thirty years to be the duration of one generation, then there are *one hundred and sixty-six thousand* of your own countrymen dying without Christ every year; and there are *four hundred and fifty* of your own countrymen dying every day without the knowledge of Christ and His salvation! This is an appalling fact, my dear brethren, but can you look calmly and coldly on this, O ye that love Christ? Is it a matter of indifference, that these individuals should pass into eternity, without any effort on your part to pluck them as brands from the burning? Esther felt, when the decree was issued against her countrymen; and she sighed and mourned over it; and she said, “How can I endure to see the evil that shall come upon my people? How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?” And cannot you say the same?

There is however, another point to consider. The evil that shall befall us shall be this—*our souls shall want the joys of God's salvation*. And tell me, my dear brethren, let your consciences speak to yourselves candidly this evening, what have you ever lost by obedience to Jesus Christ? Begin your calculation in his house this evening. When have you denied yourself any of the luxuries of life, and perhaps a few of its comforts? When have you unflinchingly taken up your cross in obedience to his commands? When have you made the greatest sacrifices to his cause, and endeavoured to follow out all his commands? I ask, Has he not repaid you with his “favour, which is better than life,” and made your cup overflow with spiritual blessings? Has he not? And when you have neglected his cause, and put earth first and heaven last; when you have cherished the luxuries and comforts of life in your heart, instead of Christ's cause and his service; when you have put self above Christ, and held the salvation of your souls indifferent, thinking of your business, of your activity in life, or of your family, or of your neighbourhood, or of your honour—have not the chariot wheels of devotedness and duty, dragged very heavily? Have you found communion with Christ so sweet then as formerly, when your first love burned on the altar of your heart? Have you not found the ordinances of God without that refreshment which you previously had? Have you not walked in darkness, and had no light? I put it thus, beloved, to your consciences, seriously and affectionately this evening, whether that passage is not true—“He that knoweth my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and I will love him, and my Father will love him; and we will come and make our abode with him.” All our consciences testify, brethren, that this is true: and therefore this mischief shall befall us—that, if we act not up to our convictions of the pressing duties which are claiming our attention in Christ's cause, our souls shall want the joys of God's salvation.

Again: *our conduct shall receive the condemnation of Christ*. I refer now to the last day. That is so plainly spoken of, that it needs no illustration: “Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.”



But I now advert to the state of mind which indifference to Christ's cause brings; and to the dishonour which even now it casts upon God. The inhabitants of Meroz did not help the *enemy*; they did not *oppose* the enemy but they stayed at home: while their brethren were engaged in war, and were going out against the enemy, they quietly looked on. There was no *opposition*, there was nothing directly opposite in their conduct. No; they indifferently looked at the war; they sent neither supplies of money nor treasures into the camp; and their oppressed brethren might fight their own wars, and endure their own perils for them. And what was the consequence? A voice from heaven said, "Curse ye Meroz; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants of Meroz: because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." They were not opponents; but our Lord has stated precisely in the same terms—"He that is not with me is against me." Neutrality, beloved, is here quite impossible: we are one thing or the other; we are Christians, or we are enemies to Christ.

Let us, therefore, see brethren, that we live up to these privileges. And the Apostle explains, in another case, the kind of punishment such individuals often receive: "Receiving in themselves the recompense of their error, which was meet." They "received in themselves the recompense of their error, which was meet." Can there be a greater punishment, than to be given up to an indifferent, covetous, hardened state of mind? O, to have it said to a man, "Let him alone," must of all the terrors which God can pour upon an individual on this side hell be the worst. See it exemplified in Judas; see it exemplified in Saul; see it exemplified in Demas. Let us dread the brink of such a precipice, the approach to such a fearful state as this. "From all hardness of heart towards our suffering miserable brethren, good Lord deliver us."

But, beloved, we hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. Your very presence here this evening, intimates a contrary spirit. You have come, it is true, with the earnest desire to hear what might be said, relative to the various openings which are about to be made, or which are making, or which are already made, for the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In many cases, perhaps, the want of the knowledge has been the result of the want of liberality on your part. The subject, perhaps, has not been sufficiently presented before you, and you have not therefore thought of it. You are saying this evening, "Jesus, what shall I do to shew how much I love thy charming name?" The text would, in the last place, suggest **THE CONDUCT WHICH YOU OUGHT TO ADOPT UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.** "Let us go," the text says, "and tell the king's household." And, brethren, let us go and carry the Gospel to our poor brethren and sisters in England that are perishing for lack of knowledge. Beloved, our brethren are perishing; and will you be kind enough this evening to look steadfastly at their condition. I do not wish you to look merely at the exterior; their drunkenness, and their vices, and their prodigality, are, perhaps, very distressing: but I wish you to look further than these things; I wish you to look at the *cause* of all this: and the cause of all this is, that they are without God, and they are without Christ, and they are without hope in the world. If they would go, as they should go, to Christ, the cause of all their evils would

instantly be banished. They are famishing, not for bread made of the finest of the wheat; our flax, our wool, and our wine, they want not: and if they were dying of famine, if they had but Christ's love in their hearts, why famine would only be a nearer road to immortality: it would be like going across the field, instead of going the long way round by the road. But they are perishing for lack of the bread of life; are dying for want of the water of life; are thirsting for pardon, and they know not where it is to be had. And though some of them, perhaps, reject it; and when your missionaries go to their doors, and say, "We come to tell you about the Saviour," they say, "We do not want to hear it; we want neither you nor your doctrine:" will you say, "Let them alone in their ignorance?" That be far from you. Look at that maniac: does he ask you to come and help him? Does he beg you to take off his fetters? Does he say, "Set me at liberty?" No: he dances in his chains; he calls his fetters ornaments; he looks out of the window of his cell, and he talks about his inheritance; he lifts up his walking-stick, and tells you it is a sceptre; he points to the seat on which he sits, and tells you it is his throne. Do you pity him the less because he is under a delusion; because he is ignorant? O no; the very circumstances of the poor maniac awaken your tender sympathies, and you pour over him, on account of his ignorance and his delusion, your warmest and most tender feelings. I have sometimes been at a funeral, where the dear infants have lost their dearest earthly relation—their tender mother; and I have seen them pleased with their black clothes, and playing with them, and running about the room with apparent delight that they had got these new habiliments: and many a sigh from the company present has issued from the mouth, as they said, "Ah, dear little children! you do not know what you have lost." Do you pity them the less because they are ignorant, because they do not know the value of the person they have lost? No; you sympathize with them, and pour out your souls in prayer for them.

And this is the very case with our countrymen; many of them reject the truth, and despise the truth: and that very consideration should awaken the tenderest sympathies of your heart, to send them more fully the Gospel of our God. O beloved, they are perishing; they are perishing for lack of knowledge; and that should awaken your sympathy. Why, you have sixty agents in your work; and you have four hundred villages; and you have about thirteen thousand hearers; and you have four thousand Sabbath-school children. I bless God that you have: but when you think that there are many villages, and many stations, where, for the compass of twenty miles round that station, it is impossible to hear the word of life preached, let it awaken your sympathies, and your earnest desires, and your liberality too, to send them the Gospel. O let us tell them that the victory is gained; that the pardon is offered, that salvation is presented, and that Christ bids every sinner come and partake of the bounties of his love and his salvation for ever. So shall you have, dear hearers, "the blessing of them that were ready to perish" come upon you.

It suggests, in the second place, that *we should go and tell of these glad tidings, because success is certain.* Success is certain. What though many of your dear missionaries, who toil night and day in the work, have not had extended encouragement of their heart's desire which you could wish—will you give up? Brethren, the London Missionary Society spread the table of the

Gospel, with all its provisions, for fifteen years in Otaheite, and not one soul, was converted by the preaching of the Gospel, as was known to the missionaries during that time. But the day of Christ's power was to come: lo, a nation, as it were, was born in a day: a revival took place; God came down, dispersed all the mists of darkness, and pointed the sinners' conscience to the salvation. "He must increase:" not only his kingdom shall come; but he must increase: "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:" he "will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh, and all flesh shall see the salvation of our God." If we had been entirely defeated in this cause, defeat in this would be better than success in any other. But we are not defeated. It is true that now and then, a little drop of divine influence descends on the congregation, and our brother is pricked to the heart; and our sister feels the power of the truth; and our mother is awakened to seriousness; and our father comes home with conviction on his conscience; and our neighbour is alarmed for his state. But presently a greater work than this shall be seen: when the Spirit of God shall be poured out from on high, then numbers shall wake and cry out, "What must we do to be saved?" Brethren, your heavenly Leader has gone up before you: he has taken all the principal places, all the forts and towers of the enemy; and he bids you, "Follow me:" he says, "There is much land yet to be possessed;" and he calls on you, and says, "Why are ye slack to go and partake of this land; why are ye slack? Why do ye not go up and plant the standard of the cross upon the soil, and claim it for me?" Why, because our hearts are cold; and because our souls do not listen to the glorious tidings of the conquests of that Saviour, which are now to be presented upon the earth.

Dear hearers, when you think, then, that success is certain, that every guinea you give to the cause of God, shall be, as it were, a seed dropped—the very mite given into the treasury, shall go towards furnishing the Gospel of God to the poor and the miserable among your own countrymen—whilst you think Christ has bound himself by oath and promise, to bless every effort made; let this stimulate you again to renew your efforts, again to desire that the glory of the Lord may be revealed, that all your kindred may see his Gospel.

Finally, brethren, let us furnish this Gospel to our countrymen, for *our opportunities are vanishing*. Time is hastening on; health is inconstant; the fashion of the world passeth away. This, *this* is the only time we can use our strength, and talents, and time, and money. Give, therefore, this evening, as if this were the last act of your lives; as if you were about to stand at the bar of Jesus Christ, and to be judged for the deeds done in the body. Let the truths that you have heard impress your mind: and now, at the cry of this one hundred and sixty thousand who are annually dying, and of the five millions who are without the Gospel, and the four hundred and fifty daily who are waking in eternity without God and without hope; now, while their cry is ringing in your ears, and while the Spirit of God is speaking through his word, now arm yourselves against all selfishness, and against all covetousness, and let the love of Christ take an entire hold of your spirit, while you say,

"Awake, my dormant zeal; for ever flame  
With generous ardour for immortal souls:  
And thou my head, and heart, and hands, and all,  
Spend and be spent in service so divine"

## THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

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ST. BRIDE'S CHURCH, FLEET STREET, MAY 14, 1835\*.

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"The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it. Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil."—PSALM lxxviii. 11, 12.

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THE occasion upon which this psalm was penned was one of deep interest in the history of Israel. The pious king and prophet was about to carry up to the favoured city the ark of the covenant of his God. It was the gathering of the clans of Israel; it was the assembling of their different tribes: "There was little Benjamin, with their ruler, and the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali." There were gathered together—as we learn from the books of Samuel and Chronicles—eight hundred and sixty Levites singing the praises of God. There, too, were the virgins of Israel in their companies, celebrating the praises of Jehovah: "Among them were the damsels playing with timbrels." There, too, went the great point of attraction, the ark, the mystic ark, the token of the Divine presence, upon which was the mercy-seat, the type of our redemption: and there the shekinah, the divine presence, glorious in the eyes of God's people, the most interesting object, at least to the spiritual eye, (though indeed it was despicable in the eye of a carnal woman)—there was Zion's lowly King, having laid aside his royal apparel, clad in the sacred vest, a linen ephod. He takes his harp, and, with a holy enthusiasm and pious ecstasy, he sings the praises of Jehovah, and dances before the ark of the Lord. Then the whole multitude strike up their national anthem, and exclaim, "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. It is well seen, O God, how thou goest; how thou, my God and King, goest in the sanctuary."

This is the *literal* interpretation of the psalm, the *primary* interpretation. but if you would understand its *prophetic* import, you must figure to yourselves a very different scene. You must conceive that a thousand years have rolled by: and now, behold, from one of the gates of the holy city there issues forth a lonely and mysterious man, accompanied indeed with a few despised followers. No royal princes there: the sceptre had departed from Judah, and the law-giver from between his feet. No pompous priesthood there: there might be a ruler, a Nicodemus, a centurion; there might be two or three favoured friends, besides the immediate disciples of our Lord. He takes them forth, and he leads them a little space from the city, unto Bethany: there he stretches forth his

\* Anniversary Sermon for the London Missionary Society.



hands, and blesses them : and it comes to pass that, as he blesses them, he is parted from them, and carried up into heaven, and a cloud receives him out of their sight. "Thou hast ascended on high," says my psalm ; "thou hast led captivity captive ; thou hast received gifts for men ; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. By the interpretation of the inspired Apostle, who quotes this very passage in the epistle to the Ephesians, you are taught that this psalm is but a Gospel hymn ; that the word which the Lord spake was but the testimony of his will ; that the enemies spoken of are the world, the flesh, and the devil ; that the triumphs are the triumphs of Jesus in the preaching of his cross.

You learn from my text some most important truths relative to our belief in this word, and to the precious promises of God concerning it. How is it we are to understand the words of the text ? "The Lord gave the word : great was the company of those that published it. Kings of armies did flee apace : and she that tarried at home divided the spoil." In dependence upon the only and sufficient Teacher—looking up to Him who alone can give me power to speak, and you ears and hearts to hear—I shall endeavour to shew you from the words of my text these four points : first, that the Gospel is to be proclaimed ; secondly, that it never will be proclaimed till the Lord gives the word ; thirdly, that when it is so proclaimed, great shall be the conquests thereof ; and lastly, the consolatory assurance, that those who promote its proclamation shall divide the spoil, though they tarry at home.

First, then, we learn from my text what may appear, at first sight, a simple proposition, but one that carries deep interest to every one of us ; namely—**THAT EVER SINCE MAN PELL, IT HAS BEEN THE WILL OF GOD THAT BY MAN THE MESSAGE OF MERCY SHOULD BE PROCLAIMED.**

Thus it was of old : Enoch, and Noah, and Moses, were preachers of righteousness. It has been so in the generations that have succeeded : God has never deviated from his plan. This blessed Book itself—what is it ? The writing of men : every letter of it was written by man ; for "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It is the economy of divine grace : angels long to do, beloved, what I am doing now ; angels long to do what many of you, I trust, are doing continually—to tell sinners of a Saviour : but they must not ; it is not the will of God. You know that in the opening of the dispensation, even in the period of miracle, of vision, of revelation, angels were not permitted to preach the Gospel. Cornelius, the centurion, had a visit from an angel, who was sent to assure him of the divine favour : but was he permitted to preach the Gospel to him ? No ; an angel appeared in his house, and stood and said, "Send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall tell thee words whereby thou and thy house mayest be saved." Why might not the angel have cut the matter short, and told him how he might be saved ? It was not the will of God ; it was not the economy of divine grace. Nay, more than this ; we learn from Scripture story, that this message of divine love has not only been proclaimed by men, but often by those particular men that we should have thought the least fit for the work : men who shrunk from it from a sense of their own inconsistencies. Thus you know how Moses shrunk from the work, and how he said, "O Lord, thou knowest I

am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue:" and not until after many assurances, positive commands, and even reproaches, was Moses stirred up to go and tell the word of the Lord to his people. So Isaiah, too, he shrunk from the work, and called himself "a man of unclean lips:" and Jeremiah; "Then said I, Ah Lord God! I am a child."

Thus you see, that in many instances (they might be multiplied) God has been pleased to select the very persons who were in their natural capacities, and according to their natural talents, least fitted for the work. We must go a step further, and say, it has pleased God that the Gospel should often be preached, and preached most eminently, by eminent sinners. Who preached like the Psalmist David, or who sinned like him? Who preached like Paul, and who persecuted like Saul? Who preached like Peter, and who denied his Lord with curses and with oaths too? The truth cannot be denied, that God has sometimes, nay oftentimes, been pleased to pluck an eminent brand from the burning, and to make him an eminent minister of righteousness. And wherefore this, beloved brethren, wherefore this? It were enough to say, God has willed it; and let every rebellious thought be stilled. We are sure it is right and good, for it is the will of our Father. But there are two obvious reasons for which this economy was devised by the Almighty and all-wise God. These were the objects he had in view—one was, mercy to man, and the other was, the glory of his great name.

I say it was *mercy to man*. Angels could not preach as sinners can. Angels could not tell of redemption as redeemed sinners can: they could not sympathize with us; they could not enter into our feelings. Suppose it possible that a sin-burdened soul went and told to some pure spirit from the throne of God, all the corruptions that arise in his heart, all the struggles and conflicts of his indwelling sin; that pure spirit would start back with abhorrence from him; he could not enter into his feelings: but sinners can tell, and *only* they; and sinners can feel for sinners, and *only* they. Thus you remember that David, on the occasion to which I have alluded, when he was pouring out his soul in penitential sorrow, pleaded this very thing: when asking for pardon, and for mercy, and for grace, he says, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will *I teach* transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Go see, again, the fallen Peter; "he went out and wept bitterly." Was he not then learning to feel for sinners? Was he not then learning sympathy, and tenderness, and gentleness, and kindness? Our Lord tells us it was so; before his fall it was that Jesus said unto him, "When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren." See the wisdom and the compassion of God. Think you that Paul would ever have been able to tell as he does, of righteousness and of unrighteousness; to tell as he does of the working of the law, and of its effects on the human heart, if he had not been a persecutor of God's Church and people? It is out of mercy to man that God is pleased to fit such instruments for his work and for his glory.

The other point which I suggested was the object of the divine mind, in thus appointing sinners to proclaim to sinners the word of salvation: it was for *the glory of his own great name*. It was to shew, that it was "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." It was that the

instrument might be levelled and laid low in the dust, and that the efficacy and the power might be known to be of God. Beloved brethren, I address many this night who are often in the habit of preaching the everlasting Gospel. I appeal to you: look into your own hearts; study the feelings of your own bosoms; look into them when you are engaged in the most holy exercises, and tell me if you are not often ashamed of yourselves, ashamed that such unworthy motives, such corrupt desires, such pride, such vanity, such selfishness, should be found stirring in that sinner's bosom, when he is trying to plead his Master's cause? Are you not constrained to allow, that you are amazed that God should make you and me the instruments of grace and of salvation to sinners? Look, too, at those who are engaged in the blessed work which has brought us together this evening. Look at the different sections of the Christian world; look at your different denominations, your different societies, your different committees: is there nothing to humble us in them? Is there nothing to make us feel amazed that the Lord our God should by such instruments accomplish a work so mighty? All this, beloved brethren, is to shew that he has committed this treasure, as the Apostle Paul says, "to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us."

But, secondly, we may learn from our text, that **THIS WORD WILL NEVER BE PROCLAIMED, EXCEPT THE LORD SEND US.** It was "when the Lord gave the word," then "the company of preachers was great."

If you look again at those several cases to which I alluded, you will find, that none of those holy men would ever have spoken a word for the Lord, if he had not sent them. It was *his* might and *his* power that overshadowed them; it was *his* grace and spirit that dragged the reluctant Moses from the mountain, and from feeding his sheep, to go on the arduous embassy of delivering the Lord's people from Egypt. It was the power of God's Spirit that dragged Jonah, the fugitive prophet, from the hold of the vessel, wherein he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, and that compelled him to go and preach mercy to Nineveh. It was the might and power of God's grace that pardoned and restored, and poured the balm of consolation into the broken heart of David, and enabled him to tell, in so many sweet lines, of the mercy of his God. It was the same hand of God that was laid on Saul of Tarsus, that struck him to the ground, and told him to go and preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. And so it is *now*: no man ever went to preach indeed who was not sent of God. I scruple not to say, that man may send, and send in vain; that by whatever outward form a man may be devoted to the work of the ministry, whether he be called by the presbytery, whether he be appointed by a congregation, or whether he receive episcopal ordination, except that man be moved by the Holy Ghost to take that office upon him, he will be but a "dumb dog that cannot bark;" he will be but a "hireling, who will flee when the wolf cometh." O that we could settle our minds on these great broad principles of Gospel truth! It would tend much to heal our divisions, to humble us all. Addressing, as I doubtless am this night, many of different denominations of Christians, I would say, Look into your own hearts; look into your own churches; and those that are without sin amongst us, let them cast the first stone at their brethren. Rather, I would say, let us all humble ourselves before God, for our

manifold infirmities, short comings, and corruptions; and let us pray for one another, brethren, that the Lord may stir up a pure spirit of godliness among us; and that he may indeed “speak the word,” and great and effectual shall be the proclamation thereof.

But I would shew, before I leave this head—and endeavour to prove, too—that the Lord has in these *our* days spoken that word, that my Psalm is now in literal fulfilment, and that “the company of them that publish it” is “great.” Look back for a moment over the history of Christendom; see the nominal church of God for centuries sleeping in indifference, in coldness, and carelessness, respecting their own salvation and the salvation of others. At length “the Lord gave the word,” and the company of the reformers appeared; and Luther, and Calvin, and our English reformers, who were sent of God, uttered his voice, preached his Gospel, and a large portion of Christendom became enlightened. But ere long the Church slept again; and until the opening of this century, with some few and illustrious exceptions, (such, for instance, as the devoted Moravians, those devoted forerunners of Christian missions; and with the exception of a solitary sentinel in the enemies’ land—as Schwartz in India, or Elliot in America) we might ask, Where, towards the opening of this century, was your missionary effort? Where was the company of preachers? Into what land was Christian philanthropy thrusting itself? Where were the active exertions of the men of God? There were none, or next to none. And now mark the result. How large a portion of this work was accomplished by that society for which I plead to-night, I will not now stop to shew; but this we will observe: that it was just at the time when this society took its rise—in the year 1795, that Christianity began to start from its slumbers: just then that the missionary zeal and spirit was quickened in our land, and other lands: and now when we look back, and consider how things *were*, and then consider how they *are*, it is not enthusiastic to say, that the word of our text is fulfilled, and that “the Lord *has* given the word,” and that “great *is* the company of them that preach it.” Admitted that they are but as the drop in the bucket, compared with the wants of the heathen world; I say there are some features in the modern exertions of Christianity by which they are distinguished from all preceding efforts. I say it, and I say it deliberately, that if you will only follow me for one moment, and consider this particular feature, which I would wish to point out to you, I will fearlessly assert, that the preaching of the Gospel in the present day far eclipses any thing in the apostles’ days.

Take up the map of the world; cast your eye upon the spot to which the Gospel was confined for the first century; and see whether it is not as a fraction compared with the whole earth. Look at the scene of missionary effort now, and mark its peculiar characteristic—namely, that there is hardly a nation, or a country, or a people, or a kingdom under heaven, where there is not at least some solitary witness for the truth of the Gospel, unto the uttermost extremity of the habitable globe: in the North, to the utmost extremity of the South, you find—scattered, it is true indeed, up and down, few and far between—but still you find witnesses for Jesus in the North, and in the South, in the East, and in the West, the Gospel preached in one hundred and sixty languages. It is true that in the apostles’ days they had great advantages; and yet I question if the Gospel was ever preached in so many languages; and I am sure, I



am confident, having considered the subject accurately and candidly myself, I am certain of this point, that since the world was, the Gospel was never preached in so many different parts of the world at the same time. I say this, that considering only thirty-five or forty years have passed over our heads since Christendom began to wake to this great work, is it not a delightful subject of contemplation; and may we not thank God and take courage for what he has done in this particular? He has "spoken the word, and great has been the company of the preachers."

But, thirdly, I gather from my text, and from the Psalm, in its undoubted prophetic interpretation, that when the Gospel is thus preached in the power of God, and in obedience to the word of God, ITS SUCCESS SHALL BE GREAT. "Kings with their armies did flee apace," as it is in the margin, a most spirited expression, "they did flee, they did flee;" heaps upon heaps, as with Samson victorious over the Philistines.

The whole of this triumphant Psalm is a description of the conquest of God over his enemies. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." The princes of Egypt are declared to be tributary; Ethiopia stretches out her hands unto God. "O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God." These enemies, and these armies, of which the prophet speaks, are none other than those of which you read in the New Testament—those "powers of darkness;" that "prince of the power of the air," who has held this fair world so long in thralldom; "the god and prince of this world:" he it is that is to be put to flight, and routed, before the armies of the faithful, before the preachers of the everlasting Gospel. Thus we know it was, in its measure and degree, in the apostles' days, when those few and faithful men, unsupported by human aid and human powers, went forth; and before the simple testimony of Jesus, the Dagon of heathen superstition, then in the zenith of its glory, fell prostrate before the ark of our God: then it was, with no other power, and no other testimony, but the declaration of Jesus Christ and him crucified, that the philosopher, and the sceptic, and the idolater, all felt and owned the power of Jesus, and all the quarters of the then civilized world bowed to his name.

We are not to think that these triumphs of Christianity in the early ages have no parallel in modern times. I am again disposed to make the assertion, that to my mind, after reflecting upon the subject, it appears to me that the triumphs of the Gospel in the present day are more wonderful than the triumphs of the Gospel in the apostolic age. Consider the extraordinary difficulties and obstacles with which we have to contend, many of which they had not. We have not only in common with them, to contend with barbarous and savage nations, or with polished and civilized nations, as China, and the nations of the east: we have not only, in common with them, to contend with heathenism in every form, and infidelity in every form, abroad; but we have to contend with the apathy, the indifference, the coldness, and the carnality of the Christian world, here at home. This was the first and great obstacle which met our efforts at the commencement: and I grieve to say, that though many an enemy has been silenced, and many a sceptic has been silenced, yet still our greatest difficulties

do arise from Christians, not from heathens. The heathens, as we have heard to-day, and as you have heard for many days, are "stretching out their hands unto God;" they are thirsting and panting for the waters of life and salvation. The cry is one from every corner of the earth—from India, from the islands of the South Sea Ocean, from New Zealand, from Africa, both southern and western; and in the north, the cry is the same, the people are thirsting for knowledge, panting for the word of the truth of the Gospel. But "the company of preachers" is too few: "O send us more preachers," they cry. And then our difficulty arises; the apathy, the selfishness, the feeling of self-indulgence, of persons who call themselves, perhaps, spiritual Christians here at home.

Then consider, I pray you, the great disadvantages under which we labour, compared with the apostles. We have no miraculous powers whereby to convince the heathen. We have had, indeed, among us, of late, a spurious attempt at miraculous powers: but the senseless jargon of the modern gift of tongues profits us nothing, when we wish every man to hear the Gospel in his own tongue wherein he was born. These are not gifts like the gifts of the apostles; they profit us nothing. We have, therefore, peculiar disadvantages: we have had one hundred and sixty languages to acquire. We have had to struggle against the curse of Babel, and we have had no Pentecostal day to meet it. We have had to reduce to writing many languages not even written before. We have had to send out men, unacquainted with the people's customs, unacquainted with the people's tongues. How hopeless, and, in the eyes of the world, how ridiculous, our endeavours! It was, indeed, an enthusiastic attempt, and must appear so in the eyes of those who know not the power that put it in motion.

Now, considering these dangers, and the disadvantages under which we labour, the results are most surprising; and that considering those difficulties, they positively eclipse the success of the Gospel in the early days. I would undertake to shew to the sceptic, to those who would question the divine origin of our blessed religion, that having nothing but the ordinary influences of God's Spirit, and nothing but those means which we possess, in order to put the light of God's truth through the world, the success which it has had, is more than commensurate with the success which the apostles had. And I am much mistaken, if God is not, in these days, dealing with us as he did with Israel and Judah. Did it ever strike you, in this point of view, that all the miracles of the Old Testament were worked in the ten tribes, and not in the two? Did it ever strike you, on reading the parallel histories of the tribes of Judah and Israel, that the Lord maintained the knowledge of himself in Judah, without miracle, by the temple service, by his ordinary and appointed service; but that in the ten tribes, where there was no temple, and no outward means, there was the school of the prophets; there was the land of miracle: God could not have maintained the knowledge of himself there but by miracle. And is he not showing in *these* days, as he showed in the former ages, what he could do by the gifts of miracle, and knowledge of tongues—is he not shewing us, in *these* last days, what he can do without them; and how he does great things, marvellous in our eyes, wherein we rejoice?

It would detain you far too long, were I to attempt to enter, this evening, on the triumphs of the Gospel. O blessed and glorious theme, of which you have

heard, and to which you have listened, for many days past, at this, our season of holy jubilee. There is, on every side, much to praise God for ; much to bless our glorious Lord for ; that he has, by means so feeble, so unworthy, with so great a mixture of infirmity and corruption, been pleased to work such moral miracles upon the face of the earth. For instance, to mention only one or two scenes of missionary effort—what can surpass the moral miracle that has been wrought by this very institution, in the South Sea Islands ? It pains me, sometimes, to hear even good Christians attempting to cast a slur upon that work ; for because European sailors and European money have been introduced to those Islands to corrupt those simple people, to turn them aside from the truth, and to empty the once crowded chapels, there are some that turn round and say, the work was not real ; it was but superficial. Alas ! beloved brethren, are there no such things in England ? Is there no drunkenness here ; no debauchery and riot here ; no divisions and contentions here ? There has nothing happened in this island, where the Lord so signally blesses the word, that has not happened in every church of God on the earth. Notwithstanding the partial truth of those statements, I would place them before any candid mind, and say, Did you ever hear, or could you ever tell, of any principle or power on the face of the earth, that could produce such fruits as this ; that could, in so few years, operate so powerfully, that a nation changes its character, and its principles, and its conduct ? It is the Gospel alone that has done it. How cheering, too, to think, that after so short a period, there are, at this time, upwards of six hundred thousand baptized heathen, and that there are, we may now say, millions every Sabbath-day listening to the preaching of the Gospel. Had we told of these things thirty years ago, we should have been sneered at as madmen : they would not have been believed.

Indeed, there is nothing gives me more pain, than to hear professing Christians speak slightly of the efforts of the present day, to evangelize the world. It is one of the evils that has arisen out of our fierce contentions : each man wants to warp facts to support his own theory. But if we would, in all candour, just take the facts, and leave the results of the future to God, and work hard for our time and day ; we should see still more glorious results speedily following. We are often told we are blind, because we cannot “ discern the signs of the times :” but there is another text to be remembered—that is, that “ he that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.” We may be lost in our speculations, and be forgetting our toils.

But it is not for me to say, beloved brethren, whither these things tend. It is not for me to say, whether these are the first large drops before the coming shower of God’s blessing ; whether these be the commencement of the ingathering of the heathen world to the Church of Christ ; or whether it is the preaching of the Gospel in all nations as a testimony against them, and that then shall the end be. It is not for me ; it would be well for many, if they had not attempted to decide this question. It is enough that God has given the word ; that the company of preachers is great ; that the blessing has been marvellous ; that hundreds and thousands have been gathered into the fold of Jesus, have fallen sweetly asleep in his arms, have died and been buried beside the bodies of those holy men who have devoted themselves to the service and glory of their God ; and for the future we will all say, “ Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.”

But there is an interesting point in my text yet remaining to be considered : It is this : “ SHE THAT TARRIED AT HOME DIVIDED THE SPOIL.”

This has evident allusion to a law that there was in Israel respecting the sharing of the spoils of the enemies taken in battle. If you turn to Numbers, xxxi. 25, you will find it written : “ And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the sum of the prey that was taken, both of man and of beast, thou, and Eleazar the priest, and the chief fathers of the congregation : and divide the prey into two parts ; between them that took the war upon them, who went out to battle, and between all the congregation.” You find subsequently that this custom was revived under David, I Samuel, xxx. 22. It appears that, owing to the confusion which had prevailed for many years among God’s people, the law had been lost sight of. It was established again by David on the occasion of his regaining his wives, his children, and his property, from those who had spoiled the city of Ziklag. Among the followers of David were men of Belial, who wanted to take all the spoil to themselves : but David rebuked them, and said, “ Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. For who will hearken unto you in this matter ? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff : they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance in Israel unto this day.” So that “ she that tarrieth at home shall divide the spoil :” that is—if I am right in the interpretation of the whole psalm—it means this : that those who help forward the missionary work, those who assist in the proclamation of the blessed Gospel, and in sending out the heralds of salvation, shall at last share the missionary’s crown, and divide the missionary’s spoils. “ She that tarried at home divided the spoil.”

I confess I have been much affected this morning with observations made upon this subject, the sin and danger of tarrying at home. Sure I am that I need not enforce *that* duty : sure I am that our own hearts, so fond of ease and the comforts of home, are very ingenious in devising pleas why it is not *my* duty, and *my* duty, to go abroad. Each person among us will find that his mind will use the utmost ingenuity on this subject, to reconcile and quiet his conscience that it is his duty to stay at home, while it is the duty of others to go and bear the burden and heat of the day. It is a very difficult and a very searching subject : and I again repeat, I have deeply felt the observations that were made upon it.

But of this I am sure : no one will deny that it is the duty of *some* to stay at home ; that it is the duty of some *ministers* to stay at home ; that there is great need of Gospel ministers in our land ; that there is much unoccupied ground in this great country—I might say, from the information contained in recent publications, much unoccupied ground in this great city. Yes ; and we are often asked, on the other hand, by lukewarm Christians, “ Why do you send missionaries abroad while there is so much to be done at home ?” We do admit, therefore, that there ought to be some of us to stay at home : and now the precious promise of my text is to come in : “ She that tarried at home divided the spoil.”



We know what these spoils shall be. They are the spoils of the adversary of our souls; they are spirits snatched from the dominion of Satan; they are brands plucked from the great burning pile. The missionary's unbloody trophies at a future day shall be the dark and swarthy children whom he had begotten in a distant land. The trophies of his victories shall be, that when he rises at that great resurrection morn, when the voice will be uttered that shall awaken the dead—then a Schwartz, and a Judson, and a Morrison, and a Brainerd, and an Elliot, shall rise, surrounded by their spiritual children, and shall stand before the Lord, and say, "Behold me and the children whom God hath given me." We believe from Scripture that there are peculiar honours and blessings in reserve for all the faithful ministers of God, who shall shine as stars for ever in heaven. But, for my own part, I deeply feel that the missionary's reward, if difference there be, and the missionary's crown, if difference there be in glory, must be brighter far than ours—must be far more exceedingly glorious. I always reverence a missionary, let him come from whom he will, and be sent by whom he may, if he bear the name of Jesus on his lips, and wear the garb of heaven's pilgrims, and walk worthy of his profession: I reverence that man from the ground of my heart, and would like to be in his situation.

But, beloved brethren, are *we* then deprived of participation in those blessed and glorious trophies which are prepared for every humble man of God who has laid down his life for Jesus' sake, and in preaching his Gospel? No: it is the assurance of my text—and the assurance, by analogy, of all Scripture—that those who "tarry at home shall divide the spoil." How condescending is our God!

It is to be observed that those who tarried at home must have been *Israelites*: those who tarried at home "guarded the stuff:" those who tarried at home were the daughters, and the wives, and the relatives of Israelites—believers *too*: and therefore they shared their spoils. Doubtless they helped them with their prayers, as Eli did when the ark went out before the people of the Lord; his heart went along with it: he "tarried at home," and, had there been a victory then, he would have "divided the spoil." So it will be with us. Those are intended in my text who are *assisting* in this blessed work: the promise is extended to every class of people who are helping it forward; whether it be those in this city who sacrifice their valuable time, and leave their business, their occupations, their counting-houses, and their offices; or whether they leave the scenes of polished life, and shut themselves up for hours, labouring, and toiling, and calculating for the good of institutions like these; or whether it be the humble collector of the poor man's pence, who goes silently from house to house, and quietly helps forward; or whether it be the poor—even the very pauper, who, having nothing to give, gives his prayers and his sympathies, and down whose care-worn cheeks the tear will steal when he hears of missionary sorrows, and on whose countenance a smile will play when he hears of missionary triumphs: *he* shall divide the spoil: a cup of cold water given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall have a disciple's reward.

See, I pray you, beloved brethren, what encouragement there is in this precious page of God's Word to lead us to believe that, at that triumphant moment, when the missionaries, the apostolical men, shall be coming from the

east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, each at the head of his respective family—that then shall those whose names have never been whispered in missionary annals, who have never received the plaudits of great assemblies, who have never been flattered by their fellow creatures, but who have been working for God, silently and secretly, and praying for the glory of his name, come and put in their claim; and it shall be admitted. “*She* :” perhaps it is put in that very form to reach the particular case: for who are the most effectual supporters of institutions of this nature? Are they not Christian *women*? If it can be said, “*She* hath done what she could,” she shall infallibly share the missionary’s spoils: she shall partake of his crown of glory, and enter in, with him and his children, to the everlasting abode of the blessed.

Now, beloved brethren, having endeavoured to establish these four important points, allow me, in conclusion, to draw two or three practical deductions from them.

Is it the Lord that gives the word? Then I say to you all, *Be careful to embrace that word yourselves*. If it is the Lord that gives the word, the Gospel of your salvation, and you trifle with that word, and reject that word, it is not the preacher you reject—it is not Paul nor Apollos you reject; but it is the word of the Everlasting God. O, let that thought sink into your hearts: it is *the very word of God*. When the minister opens the Sacred Volume, when he speaks to you in the name of the Lord—however feeble his talents may be, however small and insignificant his gifts—if he bear simple testimony to the name of Jesus, if he speak according to the law and the testimony, it is at your peril you reject the word; it is no longer the word of man, but in deed and in truth the word of God.

Is there no reason why I should pray you to suffer this word of exhortation? Must I suppose that all who assist on occasions like these have themselves received that word in the power of it? Ah! beloved brethren, it needs something deeper, something further than apparent missionary zeal and missionary exertion, to prove that we ourselves have drank at those waters which we are holding out to others. There is, even in these sacred things, a danger to the speakers, and a danger to the hearers, and a danger to the most diligent labourers in the Lord’s vineyard: if you substitute efforts for the salvation of others in the place of efforts for your own salvation, O then indeed you will be miserable losers. I fear that there will be found some at last in the great day of account, who have mingled in religious society, who have spoken all their life-time the language of Zion, who have borne the profession of consistent Christians, who at the great day will be “weighed in the balance,” and be “found wanting.” It is not for me to say to any one of you, “Thou art the man;” but O that each might say, “Lord, is it I?” O that each one might turn within the narrow chamber of his own heart this night, and say, “Now I have been engaged all this week, and for many days, in hearing and telling the heart-stirring truths of the proclamation of Jesus. I have heard much to delight, much to cheer, and much to animate me: now let me look into my own heart. How is it *there*? Has this word taken deep root there? Have I felt its sanctifying power? Has it

changed my heart? Has it made me a self-denying, self-devoted Christian? I bless God, beloved brethren, that I may go back to my people, and say that all I have heard this day has had a practical and a spiritual tendency; that I may say it is not now the custom at these great metropolitan meetings (as I used to think it once was, and I have not attended them many years) rather to applaud one another, and to flatter one another, than to give the glory to God. I bless God for the truths I heard this day, and pray that they may be remembered, and prove efficacious in our lives.

Again—but this point I have in part anticipated—if it is the Lord who gives the word, and the company of preachers is great, *let us give Him all the glory*. Let us remember, that if there is a single individual sinner converted in any one of your congregations, it is not *you* that have done it. Let us remember, that if there be any Hindoos, or Hottentots, or New Zealanders, or Indians, brought to the knowledge of the truth, it is the work of God. It is as little in our power to convert a single soul as to convert the world. 'The man that can meet the simple-hearted missionary as I have done, and heard him tell, "I have seen these men live to the Lord; I have seen them die to the Lord"—I pity the man who does not believe it: and if *we do* believe it, let us give to our God all the glory, and say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy Name be all the praise;" humbling man in the very dust, and exalting the glory of our great God.

If it be the Lord that gives the word, and sends out the preachers, and if there be such a call for the preachers, *what do we*, beloved? "The harvest truly is great, and the labourers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth more labourers into his harvest." There has been much said this day upon the subject of prayer. Now I venture to recommend something on this subject to you. Let me recommend to each master and mistress of a family—to Christian men labouring in the Gospel—to you all when assembling in social meetings for prayer—earnestly to lay this particular matter before the Lord—that he would send out more labourers into his harvest. It is, confessedly on all hands, the point we need the most; it is the common complaint of all institutions; it is the want of the word. Now, the Lord is waiting for our prayers: if he will but pour out upon us a spirit of grace and supplication, you will see what an army of preachers will rise up. Put him to the test: say to him, as they of old used to say, "Lord, thou hast said." So Jacob reasoned in prayer: so Moses reasoned in prayer. Go this night, and say, "Lord, thou hast said that thou wilt give the word, and the company of the preachers shall be great." O, let us lift up our united hearts to God that he will pour out this great supply of grace upon his Church; that he would stir up ministers, young men, and men in the prime of life, to lay aside the luxuries, the comforts, the ease, and the vanities of home, for the discomforts, and oft-times the bodily and mental sufferings, of the missionary work abroad.

Finally: is it true that "she that tarrieth at home divideth the spoil?" *What a motive, then, for fresh exertions here*. But let me not be mistaken: it is not all that tarry at home that will divide the spoil. It is not you (if such be here) who are tarrying at home, setting down upon your lees: not you who

are "at ease in Zion:" not you who are living in luxury, and pomp, and self-indulgence, while millions are perishing around you: not you who fold your arms in careless indifference, and leave the heathen to God's uncovenanted mercies. No: you tarry at home, it is true; but you will never share the missionary spoils. The man who serves his God with that which costs him nothing will never share the missionary's crown. That was a noble testimony of David when he said, "I will not serve God with that which costs me nothing." I put it to your consciences—What does your religion cost you? What of self-indulgence? What of self-mortification? What *little* pleasure and comfort have you given up? I could tell you of many poor people who have given up what to them were all but necessities of life, that they might have something more to give to the glory of God. Have you done this? If those who have large establishments would reduce them but one-third, and give the rest to God, what a fund would be produced! The principle of self-denial is not known yet in the church of God. Blessed be God, it is known by some; but it is not adequately known or felt by professing Christians. They think, for instance, if when attending these meetings they put their trifle into the plate, or if they give an annual subscription of what is considered a handsome amount, they think they have done all that is required of them. But is this the way God will reason when he brings you to account for the talent he has given to you? With shame you will say, "I spent eight hundred a year on myself, and gave but fifty for the glory of God." I believe there are many Christians who do this. I say the lowest scale on which a Christian man should give would be a tenth of his whole property to the glory of God. If I could speak of the glorious results that would follow if you would all determine to give a tenth of your income to God, you would be surprised. You would have whereof to give to charities of every description: we should not then hear the complaint which is often made, "There is nothing but calls for charity." No; you would be ready yourselves with the gift: you would be like as they were in apostolic times. It was not necessary then to send ministers to implore alms: they had to *restrain* the people from giving; they felt a delicacy in taking from their deep poverty and affliction: but the people *pressed* it on them; they came forward and said, "Take mine, take mine."

It is a remarkable circumstance in the history of the church of God, that no great revival of religion has taken place without great benevolence bursting forth. How was the tabernacle built in the wilderness? By the free-will offerings of the people: so ready were they to give that the proclamation was made throughout the camp, "Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary:" for what they had was enough, and too much. So it was when they built Solomon's temple: so it was on all occasions when they revived the worship of God; the offerings of the people could hardly be restrained: so it was in the apostolical days: and until those days are revived amongst us, the work must move on tardily. I pray, therefore, that the Lord would pour out upon us a liberal spirit, a large heart, an open hand, freely to contribute of our abundance to them that are ready to perish.

I think it unnecessary to say any thing respecting the particular institution for which I am pleading. As far as my judgment can go, and as far as my



information goes (and it is not a little on this point) I can most conscientiously commend the cause to your hearts and consciences. I do believe that whatever may be given to-night will be employed for the glory of God. There was one who "stood over against the temple," and saw the people as they threw their different offerings into the Lord's treasury. Though he is invisible now, he will watch what each man's heart does for him; he will see whether you try to escape the pain of giving, and will tell you of it another day, when he will bless and applaud those servants who have heartily given to the Lord.

## THE SINFULNESS OF UNBELIEF.

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REV. G. SPRING, D.D.

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“And when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me.”  
JOHN, xvi. 8, 9.

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THERE is a sin alleged only against sinners of the human race: it is of so aggravated a character that it cannot be perpetrated except by the inhabitants of this lower world. In ten thousand forms of secret and overt iniquity have men disregarded the divine authority, and refused divine forgiveness: but these are all venial offences compared with the sin to which I refer. Hence the sin to which I refer, is one of which it is the work of the Spirit of truth specially to convince men. “When the Comforter is come,” said the Saviour, “he will reprove (or convince) the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.” Why will he convince the world of sin? Not because men have disregarded the claims of their Creator; not because they have thrown off allegiance to his authority; not because they have abused his goodness, and trifled with his threatenings: but because they believe not in Jesus Christ. This, says the aggrieved Saviour is the enormity of their crime—“They believe not on me.”

We propose, therefore, to consider in the present discourse the nature and sinfulness of unbelief: hoping that, by so doing, we may all, beloved hearers, have more just impressions of our religion; and that those who have hitherto rejected the Divine Redeemer may no longer reject his great salvation.

Our first object is to consider, with great brevity, THE NATURE OF UNBELIEF.

Not to believe the Gospel appears, at first view, to be a mere want of faith, and therefore a very harmless thing: and if unbelief consists in the mere *absence* of faith, it is certainly very harmless; it is a mere nothing, and has no moral character whatever. There can be no criminality in mere negation, or want of volition. There is no harm for example, in inanimate things not believing; and there is no harm in the animal creation not believing. Nay, there is no harm in some of mankind not believing. This the Apostle intimates when he enquires respecting the heathen, “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” Those who have never heard Christ cannot be blamed for not hearing or for not believing: their guilt lies elsewhere, and not in rejecting the Saviour.

The Scriptures obviously mean by *unbelief* some positive criminal act of the mind. What then is that act of the soul which the Bible denominates unbelief?

Is it speculative infidelity merely? Speculative infidelity no doubt involves it, but the spirit of unbelief is often found where speculative infidelity has no place. And we would be slow to affirm, that unbelief consists in that diffidence of one's own good estate, and acceptance with God, which many a conscientious man feels. It may not be true, that in the same proportion in which a man doubts of his interest in the blessings of salvation he is an unbeliever: nor, on the other hand, that in the same proportion in which he is persuaded he is interested in the blessing of salvation, that he is a believer. Unbelief may exist where there is strong and presumptuous assurance; while there may be true faith, though weak and trembling, where there is much diffidence, fear, many clouds, and much darkness.

Unbelief is the opposite to belief; that is, *disbelief*: it is the opposite to believing; that is, *rejecting*. When a man believes the gospel he receives, loves, obeys it; when he disbelieves, he sincerely and heartily rejects it. Hence it is written, "He came to his own, and his own received him not: but to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." "Did you never read in the Scriptures," says our Lord, "that the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the chief of the corner?" Speaking of the promulgation of the Gospel after his death, he says, "First the Son of man must be rejected by this generation." We are told that the pharisees and the lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves. The Gospel is the method which God has devised for the salvation of man, and to reject this counsel is to disbelieve the Gospel. Such is the view of the nature of unbelief in several of the parables; and particularly the parables of the marriage feast, the gospel supper, and the husbandman and the vineyard. Our Lord describes this sin in that memorable declaration to the Jews, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life."

This is the true character, beloved hearers, of unbelief: it is rejecting and opposing with all the heart, the gospel of the grace of God. It is resisting this truth; rebelling against its authority; refusing its mercy; opposing its terms, and rejecting its holy salvation.

With this view of the nature of unbelief, we proceed to that which is the main design of our discourse, to speak, in the second place, of ITS EXCEEDING SINFULNESS. "And when he is come he will convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me."

"If I had not come among them," elsewhere the Lord Jesus said, "they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." This was the front of their offending: but for this their iniquity had been comparatively small: but this is the great sin, the damning sin; the sin that binds the guilt of all their sins upon them. There must therefore be something peculiarly aggravating in the sin of unbelief, whether we can discover it or not. If we mistake not, there are some things discovered in this sin which may give us a view of its enormity.

And here, let it be remarked, in the first place, unbelief is *the rejection of the highest degree of knowledge in regard to our obligations and duties*.

Sin is a violation of our *obligations*, whether those obligations are known or unknown: but in its highest and most aggravated forms, it is the violation of

our *known* obligations. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." There is nothing which so greatly aggravates the sins of a man as light and knowledge; and no where are these concentrated as in the Gospel. The Gospel of Christ plainly set before the minds of men, plainly sets before them their obligations and duties. All that is solemn and affecting in the relations which subsist between God and his creatures; all that is binding in the precepts and prohibitions of his law; and all that is odious in transgression, are there set before the mind. No matter what the precept or prohibition which the sinner violates, the Gospel enforces it; and in rejecting this, the sinner transgresses under the highest aggravation. With the Gospel in his hand it is impossible to disregard any of the claims of God and duty, excepting under strong and complicated circumstances of guilt. The heathen have very little knowledge with regard to their obligations and duties, compared with that which is possessed by those in Christian lands; and have therefore comparatively very little sin. When the Gospel is rejected, men sin against every divine requisition, and shew that they *mean* to sin at every possible hazard. The terms on which Jesus Christ in the Gospel freely offers to save them are, that they shall forsake their sins, and submit themselves to his authority and grace. The salvation he offers consists, in no small degree, in deliverance from the reigning power of sin: and when they reject his offer, is it not obvious that they virtually declare that they will not forsake their iniquity? Do they not vindicate and justify all their former sins by the very act of unbelief: nay, do they not glory in them, and, in defiance of all knowledge of their duty, repeat and express them, as it were, afresh, in every act of rejecting the Saviour?

Again, unbelief is *a resistance of the loudest calls and strongest motives to holiness*. The wickedness of men is always enhanced by the calls and motives which they resist. Where are there so many calls and invitations, so many motives to holiness, as are found in the Gospel? How shall we enumerate them? Think, dear hearers, of the excellence, the unspeakable excellence, of the divine nature, as it is there displayed; of the rectitude of the divine government; of the reasonableness and authority of the divine law; of the beauty of holiness; of the deformity of sin; of the loveliness of the Saviour; of the all-sufficiency of his atonement; of the offers of his mercy; of the lenity of his mediatorial reign; of the honourable exercise of his power and of his favour, communion, and presence; of sins forgotten; of the wrathful curse removed; of adoption into the divine family; of inheritance in the divine kingdom. These are some of the motives by which the Son of God would persuade the sinner to believe. Then think of that rebuke, of those terrors, that bondage of the curse, and those forms of horror, that exclusion from the divine favour, that abhorrence of the holy God in this world, and everlasting damnation in the world to come, which are the inheritance of all who reject the Gospel. These are some of the motives by which he would dissuade the sinner from his unbelief. But all this the unbeliever tramples under his feet; he either hates, or depreciates, or despises it all. Wherever he directs his course, considerations like these, warmly urged, and often repeated, supplicate him to return home. But he is "stout-hearted and far from righteousness:" no precept can control, no penalty can restrain him; no promise can allure him—no chains of darkness nor vials of wrath



terrify him into obedience. By all without and all within he is addressed in vain. Nothing moves that reluctant, resisting heart : unbelief has transformed it into a stone : there is an obstinacy which renders him unyielding and impenetrable, and which, if unrepented of, must seal his account in an awful retribution.

Again : unbelief involves *the highest contempt of God*, whether we consider him as Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. When the light of the Gospel shines upon the mind, it brings God directly to view, in all the persons and offices of the Gospel. As the *Father*, he formed the method of redemption, and sent the Son to be the Saviour of sinners. And no where is he brought into the view of sinners, so directly and distinctly, and no where is he treated with such indignity, as in the rejection of this method of mercy. As the Gospel is the highest expression of his authority, so unbelief sets at nought all his divine authority. As the Gospel is the highest expression of his love, so the unbeliever sets at nought all the love of God. As the Gospel is the highest expression of divine wisdom, so unbelief sets at nought all the unsearchable riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God. As the Gospel is the highest expression of the divine justice, so unbelief sets at nought that amazing exhibition of the justice of God made on the cross. As the Gospel is the highest expression of the entire excellence of the Deity, so there is no expression of the enmity of the human mind against God, to be compared with unbelief : “ If I had not done among them works which none other man did,” says the Saviour, “ they had not had sin : but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.” As the Gospel is the highest expression of the divine glory, so whatever there is of determined opposition to the divine honour and glory, is found in unbelief. The rejection of the Gospel is the rejection of that great and glorious method of redemption which comprises all the designs of Deity. All things, we are taught, that are in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, all things in creation and providence, are but the retiring features of this marvellous design. No where is there so much of God, and no where is there an exhibition of his nature so overwhelming and so perpetual, as in the development and issues of this wonderful method of mercy. Greater honour will be paid to God, and more exalted ascriptions of praise, for this redemption, than for every thing else he has accomplished. And yet all this is set at nought by the spirit of unbelief. The glory and pride of the divine nature are set at nought, and the great Supreme degraded and dishonoured in the eyes of his creatures, and his holiest and best designs opposed and scandalized by the man who rejects the Gospel.

In the same manner is this vile sin fraught with contempt of *the Redeemer and Saviour*. This incarnate, once crucified, and now raised Saviour, is the one particularly rejected : he is the stone of stumbling and rock of offence ; he is the sign that is spoken against ; he is the disowned and despised. The rejection of the Gospel is a deliberate rejection of Christ. We profess to disapprove and condemn the unbelief of the Jews, and especially their violence and malignity ; while every act of unbelief is an essential approbation of their conduct, and originates from the same corrupt source. The man who, in these ends of the earth, my hearers, and in these ages of the world, will not believe the Gospel, crucifies the Son of God afresh, and puts him to an open shame.

Nay, he does all in his power to annul his mediation, frustrate the designs of his atonement, and rob him of his reward. And then such denial of his love ; such indifference to all the tenderness of his compassionate heart : such ingratitude, amazing ingratitude, for his condescension and mercy—what an emphasis does this give to the crime of rejecting him ! There is nothing against which men array all the indignity of their unbelief so much, as against the infinite love and grace of Jesus Christ. Who could have believed there was such wickedness in the human heart ? When you see the adorable Son of God passing by angels, and stooping to the seed of Abraham ; when you behold Him who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, agonizing in the garden and expiring on the cross, and all this for his enemies ; did it never occur to you that there is something unspeakably vile in refusing him your confidence ? This gracious Saviour has no such complaint against men, as that, after all he has done and suffered for them, they should think him unworthy to be intrusted with their salvation.

Equally true is it, that this sin is the highest contempt for *the Holy Spirit*. The particular office of the Holy Spirit is to bear testimony to the truths and obligations of the Gospel : to take of these things that are Christ's, and shew them unto men : to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Since the completion of the sacred Scriptures, his sphere of influence and action is the human soul. He enlightens the understanding to receive the truth of God, and awakens the conscience to feel the force of moral obligation : he sets the iniquities of men before them, so that their sins revive, and their hopes die ; and while thus sinful and thus guilty, and in danger, he unfolds to them the method of redemption by Jesus Christ : he shews them its reality and fulness ; he sets before them its freeness and love : and, with a powerful and tender persuasion, he urges on him the offer of this mercy. The Holy Spirit throws the whole weight of his authority against their unbelief, and in favour of Jesus Christ, and his redemption. So that the rejection of Christ involves the highest contempt of the Holy Spirit. And this is their condemnation ; this adds fearful aggravation to their crime : they do always resist the Holy Spirit. Thus, whether we consider him as Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, does unbelief involve the highest contempt of God.

Again : unbelief is *directed against the best interests of the divine kingdom*. The Gospel is adapted to make men holy and happy, and to diffuse the highest degree of holiness and happiness throughout the kingdom of God. To disbelieve the Gospel, therefore, is virtually to oppose all the holiness and happiness which it is adapted to secure. The man who himself rejects the Saviour, is not only willing that all others should reject him, but does all that his example can do to induce them to reject him : and it would be no grief of heart to him, if all should treat the Son of God as he treats him, and if every son and daughter of Adam should be as unholy in this world, and as miserable in the next, as he. Unbelief has no better spirit than this : you may call it by a better name, but here is its heart : and when unbelievers see others pressing into the kingdom of God, they feel unhappy, and their hearts arise against God, as well as against those who accept his mercy. They enter into the views, and they sympathize with the feelings, and they unite with all the enemies of God against the Gospel of his Son. When the great mass of men around them make

light of the Gospel, they are happy ; nothing disturbs them ; they are gratified and when they see multitudes arrested in their career, and bowing their heads before the cross, they are dissatisfied and unhappy. And is it too much to say, that such a man is, at heart, an enemy to the best interests of the world in which he dwells, and the universe of which he is an inhabitant ? Yes, my brethren, from the bosom of such a man, abstract all those bland and social affections which so eminently fit him for an habitation among men, take off all the restraints of habit, education, self-respect, and, more than all, preventing grace ; and he will view the holiness and happiness of the divine kingdom, just as Satan feels ; and will feel towards them just as the arch-deceiver feels. Such is the true spirit and tendency of this malignant sin.

This leads me to add, *unbelief is a sin against the sinner's own soul.* Men sometimes think that they are their own proprietors ; that they have a right to throw away their bodies and their souls without being accountable to any being in the universe. But it is not so : the soul of man is the most precious deposit committed to his care : the benevolent Creator has stamped a value upon it beyond all that is material in the world. But, dear hearers, the frame of mortality may perish, and from the earlier stages of its existence in this world, sink to an abyss ten-fold deeper than eternal annihilation. There is no sin that kills it as unbelief : unbelief, incorrigible unbelief, separates the soul from God and holiness ; cuts it off from hope and heaven. This is one of the aggravations of this unnatural crime : it is a cruel neglect of the soul ; it is nothing less than choosing to be rebels against God and be lost, rather than to submit to Jesus Christ and be saved ; it is a deliberate and persevering refusal of eternal life. Is there no crime in it ? Well has eternal wisdom said, "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul ; all they that hate me, love death." Just to gratify his pride and selfishness, and show how unwilling he is to lie at the footstool of mercy, and how stoutly he can defend his soul-destroying purpose—how determined he is to live for this world, and not for eternity and heaven—the unbeliever consents to be damned. Can men neglect their own souls, and become the murderers of immortality after this sort, and yet be harmless ? What a foul, infamous sin ! O ! O ! sin ! sin ! rejecting the Saviour, and killing the soul !

Whatever, therefore, men may think of the sin of unbelief, other things being equal, nothing evinces greater moral depravity. It is the rejection of the highest degree of knowledge in regard to our obligations and duties : it is the resistance of the loudest calls, the strongest motives to holiness : it involves the highest contempt of God : it is directed against the best interests of the divine kingdom : and it kills the soul. We know of no greater sin than this ; and, in fact, this comprises the turpitude of most other sins. Here all the ingredients of human corruption are collected ; and once the restraining grace of God taken off, the most active fermentation produces nothing more odious or pestilential than unbelief. It is one of those compendious forms of human depravity, one of those strong expressions of the unsanctified heart in the very maturity of its moral corruption, which evinces nothing more decisively than that it is "desperately wicked."

Now, in viewing the considerations which illustrate the enormity of this sin,

and in applying our subject, permit me, with great freedom, to remark, in the first place, that it is obvious that *the great mass of those who reject the Gospel, have no just conception of their true character in the sight of God.* Most men, if they avoid gross sins, if their history is not blackened with some enormous crime, with some sort of infamy, though they may remain enemies of God and his Son, have no very serious compunctions of conscience. But if what has been said be true (and bring it to the standard of the Bible, and judge ye what I say)—if what we have said be true, then is it a fearful crime in the universe of God to be an unbeliever. Yes, beloved hearers; the man who, under the meridian light of the Gospel, sets at defiance the divine authority, crucifies the Son of God afresh, resists the Holy Ghost, sports with the interests of the divine kingdom, and his own soul, and, in defiance of the highest and most affecting considerations in the universe, spurns the offers of redeeming mercy for the sake of continuing in sin—what shall I say of him? Why, he is among the greatest prodigies of the universe. Assyria and Babylon knew no such sin as his: Sodom and Rome knew no such sin as his. What were all the pollutions—what the ignorance, and sottishness, and degrading vices, of ancient and modern paganism, to this rejection—deliberate, protracted, persevering rejection, of the blessed Saviour.

Dear hearers, do I address any unbelievers to-day? Might He, who knows your hearts, say to them who occupy these seats, and hear this description of the character of unbelievers, “Such are some of you?” O the guilt—the fearful, the tremendous load of guilt, that rests upon the men in this land of light and mercy, who reject God’s only Son! What shall we say to such men? O immortals! the holy God is witness of your persevering rejection of his glorious Gospel: he has heard the undutious purpose, “We will not have the Son to reign over us;” he has marked the secret determination of your souls, when you have chosen death rather than life: he has followed you with his eye when you have wagged your head, and passed contemptuously by the cross. O, what sin, is this! Angels look down with wonder and with amazement to-day, to see any of you, coolly and deliberately, and with unbroken perseverance of soul, cast contempt on their sovereign and adorable Lord, and your gracious Redeemer. And could you yourselves view your sin as God views it, as angels view it, you would tremble, and you would mourn. O, with what amazement, beloved hearers, will you, who reject the Saviour, look back from a dying bed, and contemplate the guilt of having lived in Great Britain, under these Gospel skies, breathing this atmosphere of truth and love, and yet having refused the blessings of the great salvation! With what emotions of horror and self-indignation may some of the dear and immortal people who hear me speak to-day, reflect, from some distant period in eternity, on the wickedness of having closed your ears, and hardened your hearts against the crucified Saviour!

I remark again, in view of this subject, *it is easy to account for the deep compunction and distress of mind which are often experienced by convinced sinners.* “When he is come, he shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me.” Here is the secret of the anxiety and distress resulting from the illuminated understandings, the alarmed and penetrated consciences, of awakened and convinced men. That eternal Spirit whose office it is to convince



the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, discovers to their minds the exceeding sinfulness of despising and rejecting the Lord Jesus. It is no uncommon thing for persons to feel greatly distressed in view of this one particular sin. Their convictions are sometimes very powerful and overwhelming, but for nothing so much as for the contempt they have cast upon Christ and his Gospel.

I once knew a heathen youth from the Sandwich Islands: the providence of God brought him to a Christian land, there made him the subject of his grace, and he died in the triumphs of faith. He had been about two years in that Christian country, when God was pleased to open his eyes to his condition as a sinner, and he felt as though he was lost. One day he was found alone, and in tears; and being asked why he wept, he said, "Because I have been so long in a Christian land and never accepted Jesus Christ." If this poor heathen youth, dear hearers, with a mind just emerging from the midnight of pagan darkness, was overwhelmed with the thought that he had lived two short years in rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, what think you may be the reflections of the man born in a Christian land, whose mind has powerfully resisted the Holy Ghost, with the thought that he has been doing nothing but rejecting the Saviour all his days. Ah! believe me, the convinced and awakened sinner feels the burden of his sins. He cannot thrust the painful thought from his mind; his soul is held in intense, in anxious contemplation of his exceeding vileness; he sees in a light which he never saw before, that in this long-continued and obstinate unbelief, he has sinned as he never supposed it possible for man to sin. Is it wonderful that he should be thrown into some anxiety? Is it wonderful that he should see, and feel, and fear? The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity; but when that spirit itself is wounded, who can endure the burden? Sometimes you may see him with a mind tenderly and pensively affected, and sometimes inexpressibly burdened and distressed, torn with agony, almost, for a time, driven to despair. The world wonder, and impute this to enthusiasm, and, peradventure, to madness: but the madness is *theirs* who are never moved from their indifference by the reflection that they have sinned against God, and rejected the Son of his love. O! men are thoughtless beyond conception; they are stupid as the brutes that perish: madness is in *their* hearts who have no anxiety, no anxious misgiving, no distress of soul, at the thought of having rejected God's only Son.

I remark again: in view of this subject, we see *the rectitude and the excellency of the Divine government in the future destruction of unbelievers*. The consequence of rejecting Christ, if the Bible be true, is, future and eternal death: and speaking of the nature and sinfulness of unbelief, it would be treason to the commission I hold, not to develop this truth before you. "Go into all the world," says our divine Lord, "and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Jesus Christ supposes that all those who live under the Gospel deserve to perish for not believing the Gospel. Fearful and eternal as the death will be, yet it is deserved: there will be no intermission, no alleviation, no light, no hope, in that world of darkness and complete despair; yet it is all deserved. There is an inseparable connexion between sin and its desert. If every sin deserves punishment, and must ever deserve it, most certainly this

greatest of all sins must deserve it. Unbelievers must suffer from age to age, from one revolving cycle of time to another; and the suffering cannot exhaust the evil or the penalty of their unbelief. And there is rectitude, dear hearers, there is moral excellence in the justice, the holy justice that condemns them. No dark cloud will rest on the divine government—no blemish will rest on the divine character, when unbelievers go away into everlasting punishment. As the Supreme of the universe, God will be worthy of the admiration and praise of all his subjects for thus supporting his wise and holy government, and promoting the security, order, and happiness of his holy empire.

Dear hearers, suffer me to unbosom my heart to you. If any of you (God forbid that any of you should!) if any of you should die in unbelief, and go down from this baptismal altar and the voice that utters to you the admonitions of love, and from this sanctuary, into the world of despair, it will be right in God that you perish; it would be wrong if you were to be saved: it will be right for the holy God to make you for ever the monument of his displeasure. I know we are all guilty men; and it would be perfectly just in God, so far as our own desert is concerned, to banish us all, believers and unbelievers, when personal merit is the only question, down to hell: and most unquestionably, if any persist in rejecting the Saviour—persist till they die—O, it will stand forth before the universe (and God means it shall stand forth) as a most bright and glorious exhibition of the divine rectitude, to refuse you the light you reject, and to inflict upon you the death you choose. And—God forbid that the dreadful hypothesis should ever be realized!—when any of you go down to hell, my dear hearers, in my soul I believe right well, that the holy inhabitants of all worlds will say, “True and righteous are thy judgments, O Lord!” When men from BRITAIN sink to eternal burnings, what expressions of the divine justice will go through the universe! O, you know not the privileges you enjoy. You breathe an atmosphere of light and love, every where enveloped with the mercy of the redeeming Saviour. As nothing is more certain than that you will be destroyed if you reject the Gospel, so nothing will be more just: and whoever among you shall feel the weight of this dreadful judgment, shall also feel there is nothing to extenuate, but every thing to aggravate your ill deserts, and vindicate the offended Judge in inflicting sentence at last. O, dear hearers, believe me, it will be “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!” When your calamity comes, he will laugh at it: and angels will say, Amen; and saints will unite in the hallelujahs, when the smoke of your torment goes up for ever and ever!

I have only one point to add with great brevity: *this subject solemnly and affectionately urges impenitent and unbelieving men to repent and believe the Gospel.* Many hear of it; and many a long year, beloved hearers, have you heard of Christ and his salvation: they have been exhibited to the eye of your understanding; they have been enforced on your consciences; they have made their loudest and most affecting appeals to your heart. Had you heard of them but *once*, you would have been laid under an inviolable obligation to accept these great and precious promises, and have been left without excuse for being this day aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise. But reflect, I beseech you, how often, and for how long a period some of you, peradventure, have rejected the Gospel. The Saviour has called,

and you have refused ; he has stretched out his hands, and you have not regarded. Divine forbearance has pitied you, and waited with unwearied long-suffering that you might accept his pardoning mercy ; and waits still. Parents, ministers, and conscience, with her still small, but powerful voice, have united their instructions and counsels with all tenderness and fidelity. Ah, what anguish, what bitter anguish of heart become men who have so long heard and rejected the great salvation ! O that you could be persuaded to repent and believe the Gospel *now*. *Now* the divine clemency waits ; *now*, peradventure, the Spirit of grace descends ; *now* the Saviour knocks at the door of that flinty heart ; *now* the voice of heaven, kindly melting as the love of Calvary proclaims, “ Repent, and believe the Gospel.” O, the unutterable anguish of that day when you are called to account at the bar of God for rejecting the blessed Saviour ! What a day ! What an account ! It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in that day than for you. It will be more tolerable for Chorazin and Bethsaida in that day than for you.

Dear hearers, whom I shall never see again till I see you at the bar of God, what shall I say ? O, better never to have known the Gospel than to meet such a doom ; better never to have been born than meet such a doom ! Any thing rather than this. Better, rather, ten thousand times, have died a pagan—better have fallen with Lucifer—better have been burnt with Sodom—better have **sunk with Babylon**, than have lived and died rejecting the Saviour.

## GOD THE BESTOWER OF ALL GOOD GIFTS.

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REV. H. STOWELL, A.M.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, ISLINGTON\*, MAY 10, 1835.

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“But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”—1 CHRON. xxix. 14.

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THE scene which these words introduce to our notice, is one of the most affecting and interesting that can well occupy our attention. They lead our thoughts to that venerable monarch of Israel, the son of Jesse, the sweet singer of Sion, now grown grey in the service of God; yet in his breast the fire of zeal for his divine Master burns brighter and clearer amidst the visitations of judgment. Though himself disallowed by God, because his hands were stained with blood, from building the temple for the Lord of Hosts; yet his heart longed at least to have some share in raising the blessed structure; and, seeing he could not himself be allowed to erect it, he would provide, ere he left this world, materials for its erection. He himself offered with all his might willingly to the Lord, to an extent and an amount which is perfectly astonishing; and then asked, “Who then is willing” (addressing the rulers and the hundreds of Israel)—“Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?” In answer to the monarch’s prayer, God was pleased to pour down so abundantly the spirit of love and liberality on the assembled multitude, that they gathered together a mighty store of gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, and precious stones. It would appear that at the time the words I have read to you were uttered, the monarch stood surrounded with his people, and before him the mighty accumulation of their free-will offerings: and then it was that his aged heart leaped within him for joy, and he took up the beautiful words that are before us, breaking forth in simple ascription of all the praise, and all the glory, to Him to whom alone they belong: and he said, “Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven, and in the earth, is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”

\* On behalf of the Free Church, now erecting in the parish.



These interesting words, my Christian hearers, so appropriate to the object that bespeaks our special regard this morning, will lead me, in the first place, to observe that the disposition and the ability to give to God are alike from himself: in the next place, that the *disposition* to give calls for profounder gratitude than even the *ability* to give: and, in the last place, that the ability and the disposition to give to God are never more nobly exerted than when exerted in erecting temples to the glory of his name. May his heavenly Spirit give efficacy to his own living Word!

THE ABILITY AND THE DISPOSITION TO GIVE TO GOD COME ALIKE FROM HIMSELF.

That our *ability* to give to God comes from himself, might seem a position too obvious to need illustration: but however we may admit it in theory, we are continually tempted to deny it in fact; and if we examine our own breasts, we shall find that we are continually prone to this act of ungodliness, this atheistical act of assuming to ourselves, appropriating to ourselves, and ascribing to ourselves, what simply and solely belongs to Almighty God. If we admit the position that we came from him; that he made us, and not we ourselves; that we are his creatures; that he formed us by his power, and fashioned us by his wisdom; that our body is curiously and wonderfully wrought by his workmanship; and that our minds and all its mysterious faculties are his inspiration; then that simple position necessarily involves our complete dependence on the bounty of the Creator. For what have we in the powers of our body, or in the faculties of our mind, that have not come from God? And if they came from God, then to God they belong: no tie can be more indefeasible, no tie can be more perpetual, than the tie that attaches the creature to the Creator; which will last as long as the Creator lasts, and which never will cease to exist: therefore, my brethren, we are the Lord's, whether we believe it or deny it.

But the *ability* to give comes still more from him, when we remember that he has not given (if indeed he could give) to us, or any other creature, independent existence. There can be but one independent being, as there can be but one uncaused being: and that one being must be the cause of all other beings: and that independent being must be the sustentation of all the beings he creates. So that, as truly as that we derived our existence from God, so truly we continue our existence in God. In him we live, and move, and have our being. We cannot lift an arm, or draw a breath, or tell a pulse, or think a thought, but as we are enabled, actuated, maintained in the use of our powers, and in our existence, by the same omnipotence that called us out of nothing.

Would you have this truth more simply illustrated? I might take you in fancy to that melancholy asylum for ruined minds within no great distance from this house of prayer: I might take you through its desolate and gloomy cells; I might point you to minds in ruins, that were once more vigorous, perhaps, more clear, and more in all their activity, than yours at the present moment. Why are those minds demolished, while yours continue in their vigour and healthfulness? Who hath made you to differ? I could take you to the graves around the walls of this house of prayer: I might point out to you many who might have been now as strong and as active as you; but their spirits

have returned to God who gave them : the head to think, and the hand to act, and the heart to prompt, are cold in the dust. Who hath made you to differ? I could take you into huts and into cellars : I could shew you individuals who were once as wealthy as the wealthiest of you, clothed in splendour, and faring sumptuously every day ; who now are clothed with rags, and are reduced to such abject distress, that they have not bread or water with which to satisfy the cravings of nature. Who hath made you to differ? I could point you out many who have been as diligent in business, as skilful in their speculations—who have formed their purposes as ardently, and carried them out into execution with as much energy as ever you have ; and yet their energies have been employed in vain ; their plans have been frustrated, and disappointment has met them at the end of every path. Who hath made you to differ? I could lead you to others who, from some sudden revolution which no eye could foresee, have been reduced to the greatest despondency and the greatest disappointment. Who hath made you to differ?

Beloved brethren, we are all of us stewards ; and it is required in a steward that a man be found faithful : and whether we have two talents, or whether we have ten ; whether we are rich men, and have much to give—or whether we are poor men, and can only give the widow's mite to the treasury of the sanctuary, we are equally dependent upon him. We have received all from Him : “for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.” What beautiful condescension in the Mighty God is it that he should first put the gift in the hands of his creatures, and then invite them to give the gift back to him, receiving it as if it were their own.

If, then, beloved brethren, the ability to give is from the Lord, of whom are all things, I would further shew you that the *disposition* to give to God of what he has given to us, is more, if possible, from him. Man, when he came from the hand of his Maker, was made in his image, and was therefore full of love—for “God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” But man, as a fallen creature, has lost that image, and therefore, instead of being full of God, is full of selfishness. Self has taken the place of God in his breast : all his object and all his aim is to aggrandize, to exalt, to gratify, to pamper self. Could we dissect the actions that appear good and noble in the eyes of men—could we dissect the motives and see the principles from which they spring ; we should be ready to lament where they admire, and to weep where they rejoice. Beloved brethren, man is naturally so selfish, that however, from the promptings of natural pity, he may sometimes give, and however he may at other times, by a mere regard to character, or the applause or the censure of his fellow worms, give bountifully and largely ; yet of this you may be assured, that no man can give to God, give out of love to God, with a single eye to His honour, with a simple wish of His acceptance of the gift, but God has given him that disposition, renewed him in the spirit of that mind, in which hitherto selfishness has ruled alone, and kindled the fire of heaven where there burnt the fire of hell. Never can man give to God, till God has given him a heart that is filled with the only principle that can make any of his gifts or offerings acceptable to his Father in heaven. He will never forego his requirement—“My son, give me thy *heart*” and give him what we will—our talents, our time, our efforts, our comforts, our lives themselves—yet, if

the heart be kept, all is a vain boasting: God looks on the whole with abhorrence, indignation, and contempt; and still he says, "My son, give me thine *heart*." But if the heart be given, whatever follows, that gift through Jesus Christ shall be accepted with the Father: and the cup of cold water, given from the bidding of a heart that has already been given to God, shall in no wise lose its reward; it has a value stamped on it all its own, because it is given from a disposition that is bestowed by the Spirit of God.

Beloved brethren, let a man only try by his own unaided efforts, will, and affections, to do one disinterested act; and he will find that he might sooner quicken the dead, that he might sooner arrest the waves of the sea, than by any power or resolution of his own do one disinterested act out of love to God. How can he do it? "Make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt." Out of a renewed heart renewed actions will spring; out of an unrenewed heart nothing but a polluted spring of iniquity can flow. Beloved brethren, it is therefore a position alike that commends itself to Scripture and to reason, that the ability and the disposition to give to God must alike come from himself.

I am led, in the next place, from the words of the Psalmist, to shew you, that WE OUGHT TO BE MORE PROFOUNDLY THANKFUL FOR THE POSSESSION OF THE DISPOSITION, THAN OF THE ABILITY, TO GIVE.

You will perceive, by a reference to the passage, that the emphasis of the Psalmist's gratitude is laid upon the *willingness*, rather than the *ability*; for it is said, "the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy:" and his language was—"Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?" You will perceive, brethren, that the whole stress of his gratitude is laid upon the *willingness* that the Lord had given them to give to him that had given to them all. O brethren, it was not the mighty accumulation of treasure; it was not so much the amount of the gold, the silver, and the precious stones, that filled the heart of the monarch with such ecstasy: it was the readiness and the cheerfulness with which the people gave. They felt it to be a privilege; they considered it their highest honour to give thus to the Lord God of Israel.

Beloved brethren, by a very few and simple arguments, it may be made apparent to you, that the gift of the disposition from God, far transcends the ability without the disposition. For the ability to give is granted to multitudes that are enemies to God, and rebels in their minds, and who will perish everlastingly. We know, alas! that God often "fillet the belly of the ungodly with his hidden treasure;" that they leave their substance to their children; that they build their houses, and call them by their names, so that they should endure for ever; and yet they go down to the grave, to the narrow tomb, and the shroud and the coffin are all their wealth can procure them, and beyond this world the wealth of the world would not procure one drop of water to cool their tongue, parched in that flame. O brethren, think little of wealth in itself—honour in itself—human applause in itself—distinction in this world in itself—all are but phantoms and shadows, except as they are consecrated to God. *Then*, indeed, they may subserve his glory, our own happiness, and our own reward

hereafter. But if we make them objects of themselves ; if we use them as though they were our own ; if we are unfaithful stewards ; if we are using in ourselves what God gave us in order that we might set forth his glory, and set forward the salvation of our fellow men ; then our gold is cankered, and our garments are moth-eaten ; the rust of our treasures will eat up our whole heart as with fire ; and we shall wish, amid the torments of the lost, that we had been born with Lazarus on the dunghill, rather than found with the rich man in the mansion. Waste of wealth, of knowledge, and of talent, does but enhance our guilt, and, therefore, deepen our ruin. Well would it have been for many of the rich and the great that they had had to beg their bread from door to door, rather than had the rich gifts of God's bounty to render their future account the more dark and the more tremendous.

Brethren, it is not so with the disposition to give which comes from God. God gives this only to his people. Many of them are poor ; like Lazarus, fed with the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table ; but they are rich—rich in the love of God—rich in the hope of heaven—rich in the heart that is filled so largely with benevolence that it can grasp the world in its embrace ; rich, therefore, for having nothing, they possess all things. The disposition to give is God's precious talent put into the souls of his own children. They are like him, because they are born of him. He puts not off his heritage with the poor perishing wealth of this world : he would make them think little of these things compared with the unsearchable riches of Christ. And, brethren, one grain of genuine love to man, springing from love to God, its only source, is worth all the wealth of Peru : and if we had the whole world without that, we are poor in our riches, and desolate in the midst of our glory : for “ what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? ” And the soul that hath not love to God, springing forth in love to man, is dead while he lives ; and going into eternity thus dead, his death must be eternal.

Further, brethren, the disposition to give to God calls for livelier gratitude, inasmuch as the ability without the disposition can never make a man happy ; but the disposition without the ability fills the man's breast with what riches can never purchase. Many of the sons of wealth and grandeur have, amidst their splendour, a wicked heart, a resisting conscience, and a mind which, like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, casts up mire and dirt. O what false estimates do we sometimes make of happiness ! The mind is the seat and centre of a man's misery or of a man's enjoyment : such as the heart is, so is the man's belief. The man who has all the wealth of the world, but has not a heart to use it for God, must be feeding on ashes : a lying and deceiving heart hath turned him aside ; he is sowing to the wind, and shall reap the whirlwind ; he is following a shadow, and grasping a phantom ; he is sowing to the flesh, and of the flesh shall reap corruption. But a heart that is rich in love to God, and rich in love to man, however poor the circumstances of the individual, has in it a well of water springing up into everlasting life ; is filled with a joy with which the stranger intermeddleth not—with a peace which passeth all understanding—a hope that maketh not ashamed. It has in that blessed disposition a source of joy which thousands of rich men, if they but knew its preciousness, would buy with all their substance ; and gladly would kings give up their crowns and their sceptres, could they but taste for one hour the joy



that springs from disinterested love. He is the happy man who can realize from his own experience the sublime sentiment of our Lord when in human form below: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." If we know not that blessed truth, we are strangers to real happiness; if we have never tasted that fountain of living water that maketh glad the city of our God.

The *disposition* to give, unaccompanied with the *ability*, is received of God according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not. Though we give all our goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth us nothing: if our hearts be inspired with heavenly charity, then, though we give but a crust of bread, or the widow's mite, God accepts it; and it is more in proportion to a poor individual than the gifts of the greatest sovereign on earth. God is a just God; he does not reap where he has not sown, nor gather where he has not strawed; but accounts him that is faithful in little as faithful also in much. He will not condemn a man because he has not two talents: if he is condemned, it will be because the one talent was hidden in a napkin instead of being laid out for the glory of God. The poor man's crown will be as bright as the rich man's; for it is according to the faithfulness, and not according to the ability, that we shall be judged at the last day. Are there not many of the poor, rich in faith, rich in liberality, rich in love? And if they are ever tempted to envy their richer neighbours, it is on such occasions as these, when their hands can so ill obey the promptings of their hearts, and when they would give largely into the treasury of the house of God. If there is one object more than another that calls for profoundest pity, it is not the poor man who has the heart, but not the hand, to give; but it is the rich man, who has the hand to give, but not the heart. He is the poor man—poor in the eyes of angels, poor in the eyes of God, poor for eternity.

Further: The disposition to give calls for profounder gratitude than the ability to give, inasmuch as the disposition to give brings us likeliest to that blessed Redeemer, who was not, when on earth, a man of wealth and grandeur; who came not in the splendour of the monarch, with thousands of attending legions; but was himself "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," not having where to lay his head, and being dependent on the charity of others; so that from the hand of charity, the Lord of the universe received the pittance of his daily support. Does not this tell us that it is not the *ability* to give that marks a man as the favourite of heaven, but rather the *disposition* to give. For what was he giving? Giving the glories of heaven—giving the homage of angels—giving his own heart's blood, to save sinners. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." And when was this mind in us that was in Christ Jesus? When have we counted all things but dung and dross, that we might glorify our Father, and render to him what he has lent to us?

I am, in the last place, to show you, that THE ABILITY AND THE DISPOSITION TO GIVE ARE NEVER MORE NOBLY EMPLOYED THAN IN ERECTING TEMPLES FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

Charity, to be fully efficient, must be wisely regulated; and the charity that does not proportion its gifts to the urgency of the claims upon it, is wanting in

that wisdom which is from above. Let prudence ever guide the hands of your charity, to give to objects in proportion to their momentousness and their magnitude. There are objects of a temporal nature momentous and deeply affecting. To build alms-houses for the aged and the destitute; to rear asylums for the insane; to support dispensaries for affording medicine for the sick; to erect infirmaries for the reception of the wounded and the maimed; to deal out our bread to the hungry, our water to the thirsty, our garments to the naked; these are exercises of the charity that delights in doing good. But if man be not the creature of time, but a candidate for eternity; if his nature involves not merely the tent of clay, but a spirit deathless as Deity; if eternity is his life-time, his interests and his destinies all centering there; if, as man is found in this world, he is found in that world; then the charity that has to do with the *soul* and its eternal interests, as far transcends the charity which has to do with the body alone, as eternity transcends time, and the deathless spirit outweighs the tenement that it inhabits.

Therefore, if charity is to be guided by discretion, and discretion is to be informed by Scripture, the charity that has to do with men as immortal beings, is the charity nearest to the charity of God incarnate; who came from heaven to earth, not to heal the body, or provide for the exigences of time, but to heal the immortal spirit, and furnish it for the ages of eternity. Therefore, the charities that are designed to instruct the ignorant, to illuminate the dark mind, to convey the truth of the Divine Word home to the conscience—those charities that are adapted to promote the ordinances of religion, the sustentation of the sanctuary, for the publication of the Gospel, whereby it pleases God to save them that believe—these should take the first place in our estimation, and have the largest share of our benevolence. The worldly man will give to the necessities of the body; it is only the Christian man who will give, from conviction, to the exigences of the soul: because the exigences of the one are obvious and palpable to the senses of the unconverted man; but the exigences of the soul can only be known to him who is conscious of the exigences of his own soul.

Further: though God uses sometimes the written word, and sometimes employs education, for the conveyance of the light of heaven to the heart, yet, after all, it is by the ministration of his word that he most glorifies his Name. If, indeed, the Gospel shall be proclaimed to every creature before the last coming of our Lord, then to provide for the preaching of that Gospel in its simplicity and purity, is the sublimest charity.

Further: if, in order that the solemnization of the ordinances of religion be decently conducted, accompanied with the prayers and the praises that are fitting, that God may be glorified by it, there should be decent and fit houses of prayer, (and though in early times, the rock and the wilderness might form the place of ministration, or a highway, that seed might be sown, yet, at least, it were a reflection on our Christian country, a reflection upon the preaching of the Gospel, a reflection on our gratitude to God, if it were necessary thus to drive the Gospel abroad, as it were, and not to furnish a place for the tabernacle for the ark of our God)—then, assuredly, to furnish houses of prayer, decent, suitable, and prepared for the ministration of the Gospel, and the worship of the public assembly, is, of all charities, perhaps, that a Christian man can pro-

mote, the noblest, and most exalted, and the most acceptable to God : for it is, of all means, the most likely, humanly speaking, that God will make effectual to the salvation of sinners, and the perfecting of his saints.

Beloved brethren, let not this be thought a stronger assertion than may be borne out by truth. Surely I may apply the observation to many that surround me, and say, Is not your own parish a living illustration of the argument I am pressing ? Can you not testify, that since that revered individual whom God has exalted now to such a vast scene of ministration (may that God, who has called him to it, give him strength in proportion to his day, that like a fine setting sun, his last days may be his brightest)—can you not testify, that since that revered individual, in the providence of God, had the oversight of the affairs of this vast population of your, at that time, destitute, and very much neglected parish ; and since, the good hand of his God with him, he has been able to give willingly himself, and you, his people, were enabled to give willingly also, and cheerfully, to the service of God, and you have seen on the right hand and on the left hand, the houses of prayer, with their heaven-pointed spires and their decent turrets, and you have heard the sound of the Sabbath-speaking bell, inviting your wandering and Sabbath-desecrating population to bend their steps to the holy waters—can you not witness that since then, there has been a mighty reformation within your parish ; and can you not say yourselves, that many of you, then strangers to the method of salvation, have been gathered home by the great Shepherd ; and that many who laughed at religion, now fear it ; and that many who blasphemed the holy Jesus, now praise his holy name ; and many that were hastening to hell, are now travelling to heaven ; and many that were dead in sin, are alive to God ; and that many that were without God and without hope in the world, are now children of God, and heirs of everlasting life ? And I may appeal to yourselves, whether you have not a plain, an ocular demonstration, that there is no charity to be compared to that which furnishes houses of prayer, if those houses of prayer be occupied with ministers that speak according to the oracles of God. Beloved brethren, it is the truest charity for time, as well as for eternity ; for the body as well as for the soul. There is a liberality, a prudence, a forethought, a truth : let there be uprightness, and these will all follow in the train of the blessed Gospel of Christ Jesus. Let there be but this in any population, and you diminish the amount of poverty, destitution, and crime, and the amount, consequently, of evil, and ensure the amount of social happiness : you make more little cottages bright and happy ; you make more fathers and mothers to train up their children in peace and love, in uprightness and honour : and thus, my dear brethren, you leaven the mighty mass of our population. Every church where the Gospel is faithfully preached, is, as it were, a little pool of Bethesda, from whence go forth healing waters to heal the salt desert, and to cure the corrupting marshes, that before stagnated around that locality. Therefore we may appeal to your own observation, and to the matter of fact in this parish, whether the erecting of temples to the glory of God, and for the ministration of the Gospel, be not the most sublime and noble charity that can engage the heart and the hand of the Christian man.

Beloved brethren, our brethren without the pale of the establishment in this parish, I believe, have also set you an example. I wish not that their temples were fewer, I wish that yours were increased ten-fold ; and that, instead of

keeping behind the population, as is usually the case, the places of prayer went before the congregation; and that thus there were ready furnished the apparatus of spiritual and moral improvement. Then indeed there would be hope that we should have our population springing up in the fear of God. Then we should have more hope that that blessed exhortation of the Apostle, that was read in our ear this morning, would be carried into effect, that all men would be loved, that God would be feared, and that the king would be honoured.

Beloved brethren, let me remind you, the Church of England has been verily guilty in the restrictions as to places of worship, which, up to a very late period disgraced her. I say advisedly, *disgraced* her. Had it not been for those suicidal restrictions, a large proportion, I might venture to say one moiety, of all the chapels now without her pale, would have been within her blessed inclosure; we should have had their little turrets, and we should have had the Sabbath-speaking bell echoing from them. She has driven many from her bosom by not providing room for them: for, however you may think you have provided sufficiently, there are individuals in the situation of one who has borne testimony that she has been long resident here, and has sought in vain a solitary sitting for herself, in the Church of England. If that individual had been driven into the arms of dissent, we could hardly have blamed her; though she would have done a hundred times better, by waiting till it had pleased God to open a door for her. You see, therefore, that however you may think it well supplied, in reality there is at this moment urgent necessity for more room in the Church of England. Hear her crying to you, her children, "Lengthen my cords, and strengthen my stakes, that I may gather to my bosom the multitude of my multiplied children." If the Church of England had allowed the principle of voluntary charity in her breast more liberty, you may rest assured, that it would have wrought more powerfully within her; and we might have looked to our temples, and said, Here are the fruits of voluntary love in the Church of England. So far is an establishment from overlaying and swamping that principle, that it does but regulate its extravagances, supply its deficiencies, and give it direct and permanent energy.

Therefore, brethren, let us now prove, that greater enlargement is given to us for furthering the interests of the church by multiplying her sanctuaries, that that principle, though it may seem to have been dormant, when not attended to, that the fire was there, and only needed to be allowed to kindle, that it might blaze forth in its beauty and splendour. I am led, therefore, beloved brethren, in bringing the subject home to your minds, to speak to you thus plainly and publicly. If those who are rich—not poor in heart, not with the poverty at which God looks, but with that poverty which makes a man spend all on himself, who has not so much nobleness or generousness of heart given him, that he can feel any happiness in giving to God, but spends all upon his own paltry self, and can have no conception of the duty of giving to the Lord who gave him all; if any such are here, I would say, O, you are the objects of pity; you are, indeed, the mendicants—the individuals that are indeed poor for eternity. O, never rest satisfied till you, by the grace of God, taste the love of Christ; making you love one another; until you are led to feel the impulse and the power of that motive of the Apostle, "The love of Christ constraineth us;" and until you can feel the appeal of that disciple whom Jesus loved, "Beloved,



if God so loved us, then should we also love one another." You must find the love of God as it is manifested in the cross of Christ, the love of God in choosing you, calling you, redeeming you, accepting you, sanctifying you, glorifying you: and then, brethren, it cannot be but you will love one another.

To the poor I would say, to my Christian brethren who have little to give, Give of that little, and God will esteem it much. If you give it to him with a heart overflowing with love, a heart which he has given to many a poor man, then may your Saviour say to you, as he said to the poor church of Smyrna, "I know thy poverty; but thou art rich." O blessed the poor man of whom his Saviour can say, "Thou art rich;" for if Christ make us rich, we are rich indeed. But without him, though the universe were ours, we were poor, poor and perishing. O, then, let the poor man be rich in faith, rich in Christ, rich in contentment, rich in love, rich in charity; and he has no cause to envy his richer neighbours; but rather to bless God that he has not put him off with the riches that perish, but given him the imperishable riches of his grace.

Christian brethren, I would plead with you on behalf of that house of prayer, which you, through the liberality that God has given you, have so far raised, and, I trust, by your liberality, will fit and furnish as becomes the temple of God. You have well done in that which you have done; and assuredly whatever you have given for that object, will not cost you a pang upon your death-bed. You have spent much in other ways that you will look back on then with shame, alarm, and contrition; but for what you have given to God, from love to God, in order that your poorer brethren might become rich through the knowledge of Christ Jesus, you will thank God and say, "Who am I, and what am I, that I should be enabled to give thus willingly to please my God? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have I given thee."

I am told, brethren, that the locality where that new structure is raised, is one where it is especially needed. I am told that the poor around it are casting towards it many a fond look of expectation, and are gladly expecting the time when it will open its doors to welcome them to hear the glad news of salvation. I may add, too, without presumption, from considerable personal knowledge of him on whom the choice of your minister has fallen—that he who is to minister in your sanctuary, is one that loves, I believe, *loves* to preach the Gospel of Christ with a fervent and devoted spirit; and one that, from his long ministration amongst you, his acquaintance with your habits, his sympathy with your sorrows, has especial aptitude to serve in that especial ministration to which he is called. So that I can indeed assure you, as far as we may judge of man, he will indeed serve the Lord Christ amongst his poorer members with devotedness of heart and soundness of doctrine. May the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, that has called him to a post of higher responsibility, so succour him by his grace, and guide him by his wisdom, that he may save himself, and those that hear him!

Christian brethren, I invite you then to the honour and privilege of giving something to the great God and Saviour that has given you all that you have. Whatever of intellect, whatever of calling, whatever of strength, whatever of riches, whatever of comfort, whatever of domestic endearment you possess, all this give him; and you may be assured you will not have too much to give to God. What you keep back unduly for him, that you lose; what you give, out

of love to him, that you save. O, be misers there; be avaricious there: you cannot have too much treasure before you in heaven. For a man to have it said of him when he dies, "Such a man has left behind him hundreds of thousands"—how would angels read this on his tomb? They would view it as a mill-stone that sunk him deeper in hell, if he had saved it by robbing his God, and thus robbing his own immortal spirit. Angels would read it—if Christian humility would allow it so to be written there—with joy and gratitude, if it were said, He died poor, for he had given all to God; and yet rich, for God had given all to him—given him his grace, and, in giving him that, given himself. May you so give, and may God so give to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## THE SOLICITUDE OF CHRIST FOR INCORRIGIBLE SINNERS.

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REV. G. SPRING, D.D.

TABERNACLE, FINSBURY, MAY 24, 1835.

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“ And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.”—LUKE, xix. 41.

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THIS affecting declaration, as you will recollect, is made concerning Jesus Christ. As he was going to Jerusalem for the last time, just as he was ascending the Mount of Olives, which lay over against the city, a multitude of ineffably tender thoughts rushed on his mind, and he wept. Long before his incarnation was this favoured city the place of his occasional habitation among men. Here his glory rested above the mercy-seat upon the ark of the covenant. Here he had dispensed his law, and the memorials of his grace; and from this radiating point were his truth and mercy to go forth to the ends of the world. Here, too, he was to establish the first Christian Church, and accomplish the promise of his Father in the long expected effusions of his Spirit. At a little distance before him also lay the garden of Gethsemane. From the Mount of Olives likewise he could look across the city to Calvary, where, in lingering and excruciating agony, he was so soon to pour out his soul unto death. And yet it was not for himself he wept; it was over that ill-fated city. His own sorrows were lost sight of and forgotten in theirs: “ O Jerusalem,” he exclaimed, “ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!”

It is worthy of remark, that the individuals towards whom the sympathies of Christ were here so tenderly directed, were men whose habits of sin, and love of sinning, were incorrigible. They had filled up the measure of their iniquity, and the cry of it had gone up to heaven: the wrath of God was just about to descend upon them in the destruction of their city and temple, and in the sufferings and overthrow of his scattered and abused people: a people that were to be a hissing and a by-word, a living miracle of the truth of what they denied; an awful memento of the fearful consequences of disregarding the time of their visitation. Jesus saw that the time of their repentance was gone by; that the day of grace and hope with them was gone by for ever: and as he beheld the city he wept.

There is much, my brethren, in the condition of such men, to interest every benevolent mind. There is indeed every thing over which angels and men, and Jesus, the Lord of angels and men, might weep. What we propose in the present discourse, therefore, is, to specify some of the more obvious charac-

teristics of incorrigible sinners, and to inquire what there is in their condition to excite the solicitude and sympathy of Jesus Christ.

In the first place, I am to specify SOME OF THE MORE OBVIOUS CHARACTERISTICS OF INCORRIGIBLE MEN.

It may be some such have come up to the house of God this evening : and yet I am not about to be so presumptuous as to pretend to lift the veil, and predict who of all this assembly will be finally rejected of God. This God alone can, or has a right to do. He could disclose to us who, as he looks over these seats, and tell us before the time who, of all this people, will remain unmoved and incorrigible to the last. He could tell us where they sit ; and to what families they belong, and what business they follow, and their age, and name : and, if we mistake not, it is easy for us to see, that there are several classes of people, who, to say the least, are greatly exposed to unyielding impenitence, and who give fearful indication of final ruin.

This may be affirmed, in the first instance, of *men of a sceptical turn of mind*. Such men are very apt never to become pious. They are not absolutely infidels ; but they have a very unsettled state of mind. When their consciences are oppressed, and the truth of God perplexes them, they find relief in doubt and uncertainty. They are not sure that one religion is not as good as another, and have not made up their minds whether all that is said about vital godliness and a change of heart is true. When they are alarmed, and partially convinced of their sins, they run from their convictions into some soul-destroying error, and come as near as they can to infidelity : and then, again, when their convictions pass away, for the sake of satisfying their consciences they go back to the plain truths of the Bible. And thus they vacillate between truth and error, so that it is difficult to the last degree to arrest and impress their minds, and altogether very improbable that they will ever become the children of God.

Another class of persons who are rarely made the subjects of grace, are *those of notoriously loose and vicious habits*. The man whose habits are secretly vicious, is far enough from the probable sphere of divine grace. But the man whose pleasures are *professedly* low and grovelling, who has, for example, become the prey of intemperance, or of impetuous and licentious passions, and whose unrestrained propensities goad him on to unblushing crime, already bears the mark of premature ruin. The conscience of such a man is necessarily benumbed and seared, and the best feelings of his soul are prostrated. Those natural and generous sentiments on which the Spirit of God usually operates, are so far destroyed, that even now he seems a vessel of wrath, fitted to destruction.

It may also be remarked, that *men who are in the habit of making light of sacred things, and trifling with God*, seldom become men of piety. If they can scoff at religion, if they can deride its conscientious disciples, there is little reason to believe they will ever become its disciples themselves. A shrewd observer of human nature remarks, " Men may alter, and become that which they hate, but not often do they become that which they despise." If you see a man who can boast of his profanity, who can glory in turning the Sabbath into a day of business or amusement, who blesses God that he is no Christian, and no hypocrite ; you may greatly fear that he will carry his contempt of



divine things to his dying pillow, and never become fit for the kingdom of God.

In the same melancholy multitude are likewise found, all *those who are ardently and eagerly attached to the world*. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for such persons to become the followers of Jesus Christ. If they are rich, they have too much to forsake; if they are poor, they have too much to gain. Excessive worldliness, merely, will probably drown them in destruction and perdition. They will be apt to indulge themselves in fraud and falsehood, in duplicity and management that are inconsistent with Christian rectitude. They will be very apt to hold unlawful gains, or pursue an unlawful business; and it will cost them too much to forsake all and follow Christ. And even though they be men of acknowledged integrity, yet when wealth is the object that fills the eye, and fires the heart, and engrosses the thoughts, and employs the hands, and occupies the time—O how little reason is there to hope that they will lay up treasure in heaven!

There is another class of men who exhibit fearful symptoms of deep degeneracy, and they are *those whose chosen companions are the guilty enemies of God and all righteousness*. Men cannot habitually associate with those who are destitute of all moral principle, and have no fear of God before their eyes, without partaking of their character. Eternal Truth has declared, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed.”

Those persons also give strong indications of being incorrigible, *who have become hardened under religious privileges*. The truth of God is generally quick and rapid in its saving influence upon the souls of men. It is much more likely that a man will become pious during the first year of a serious attention on faithful preaching, than that he will ever become pious after having sat under faithful preaching for a series of years. Such persons have no serious, tender susceptibility of soul: instruction does not teach them; admonitions and reproofs will not move them; mercy and judgment do not move them. Of all these God has said, “He that being often reprovèd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

Still more hopeless are *those who have outlived conviction, and resisted the Holy Spirit*. I have seen many such persons, and after the progress of years they appeared to be abandoned to incorrigible obstinacy. Where the Spirit of God has been again and again rebuffed and grieved away, and the mind is left unconcerned, it usually plunges deeper and deeper in stupidity and guilt. Especially is this apt to be the case, where persons have survived three or four powerful revivals of religion without being reconciled to God: when divine influence has been descending around them, like showers, and amid all the living verdure they have remained like barren trees, and cumberers of the ground, there is too much reason to apprehend the severe denunciation against the barren fig-tree, “No fruit grow on thee henceforward and for ever.”

There is one class of persons more whose condition is as hopeless as that of any we have mentioned; I mean, *the hypocrite and self-deceiver*. They are those who, if they deceive others, are under strong temptation to deceive themselves; and if they deceive others, they will probably cling to their delusions. Very few are farther from the prospect of heaven than these; nor is it probable

they will be roused from their dream, except by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God.

Persons of this general description, like the Jews over whom the Saviour wept, appear to be the incorrigible enemies of God. We say not that they are beyond the reach of mercy; but who would venture to express any very strong expectation that they will ever become the humble followers of Jesus Christ? Who rather does not often fear, that he shall one day see them fall into the hands of an angry God? It was the certainty, nay, the near prospect of this, that excited that solicitude and tenderness to which our text refers, in the conduct of Christ, when he drew near to Jerusalem and wept over it.

We proceed, therefore, in the second place, to inquire, **WHAT THERE IS IN THE CONDITION OF SUCH PERSONS TO EXCITE THE SYMPATHY AND SOLICITUDE OF CHRIST.**

Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." His heart is as kind and affectionate, and as full of compassion now, as when he bled on the cross, and prayed for his murderers. The same spirit which led him to weep over Jerusalem eighteen hundred years ago, would lead him now, if he were on earth, to weep over incorrigible sinners wherever they are found. Nor are there wanting, beloved hearers, causes for this solicitude, whatever view we take of the character or condition of such incorrigible men.

One of these is, *their determined rejection of offered mercy.* This, dear hearers, was the grief of the Saviour as he wept over Jerusalem. The Jews were his peculiar people; his kindred according to the flesh. "Unto you first," says the Apostle Peter, "God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." But, "He came unto his own, and his own received him." No, they would not receive him. Jesus himself knew this; he felt it: it was like a dagger to his heart; and when he thought of them he wept. So it is with all incorrigible men; deliberately and to the last they reject the Son of God: nothing will persuade them to accept his offered mercy: they will not come to him that they might have life. They neither desire nor are willing to receive the salvation of the Gospel. They hate and despise the person and the truth of the Redeemer; and, though offered on the most reasonable terms, they refuse to accept his mercy. And never is the Saviour so much grieved as when he is thus rejected. For his *love* they are his enemies. Him they reject, who, from compassion to our own ruined race, left the bosom of his Father, emptied himself of his glory, became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and died on the cross. He invites them to the arms of his mercy; he pledges them a warm and welcome reception to the bosom of his love; but they will not come. There is nothing in his person, there is nothing in his truth, there is nothing in this joyful sound of pardon and peace through the blood of his great atonement, there is nothing in the promise of eternal life to engage their affections, or charm or subdue their obduracy. Well is he represented as weeping over such sinners. Never does he consider himself treated with such foul ingratitude and indignity, as when men thus despise the offers of his love. He might be incensed with displeasure; he might be irritated with indignation: but it is much for his amiable and beloved character to be wounded and grieved.

He laments over their blindness; he weeps over their infatuation; and, if it were not in vain, would still cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Again, Christ weeps over them for *their perversion of the means of grace*. It was this that drew tears from his eyes, and lamentation from his tongue, as he stood over that ill-fated city. Time was when they might have been the holiest and happiest men on the earth; but they had abused and misimproved all the means of grace and salvation; and now their day of grace was past, and their opportunity of repentance had come to an end. And, dear hearers, what more affecting consideration can address itself to the heart of infinite love, as he surveys the melancholy condition of incorrigible sinners, than this? The Sabbaths that might have smiled with mercy, and that might have sanctified and fitted them for heaven, are gone. The sermons that once interested them, and almost persuaded them to be Christians, and that might have become the means of God to salvation, have left them senseless and hard as a stone. The goodness that once moved and melted them has now lost all its charms, and seeks to win them in vain. The judgments that once agitated them with terror, and that might have appalled and subdued their obduracy, now only irritate and confirm their impenitence. The hopes that once began to dawn upon their minds, and that might have thrown a soft and composing light over their mourning, are now turned to presumption or despair. The Spirit of God, which once filled them with all the bitterness of remorse, and all the restless anxieties of conscious guilt, and that might have made their bodies temples for himself to dwell in, has gone out from these chambers of wickedness, and left them empty, swept and garnished for the repossession of some foul spirit, who has entered in and dwells there. The very means best calculated to awaken, and convince, and save them, have the most served to harden and destroy them: instead of being a "savour of life unto life," they have become "the savour of death unto death." Instead of finding some avenue to their hearts, they have shut them, and locked them fast for ever. Instead of dissolving, they have only rivetted and made it more immoveable. And under all these kind and powerful influences, they have gone farther from light and farther from heaven.

And tell me, who would not weep? What more affecting spectacle beside the abodes of despair, than an immortal being thus abandoned to the only means of holiness and heaven, and given up to undisturbed and irretrievable repose in sin? Opportunities of the sweetest promise are fled, never to return. All the means and motives in the richest treasury of heaven are exhausted: and this heir of immortality is miserable and poor; his mind is blighted and barren: the sun has risen upon him, the rains have descended; but it is desolate, it is burnt over, never to be reclaimed: and these invaluable means of salvation are now probably taken away and given to others. And what wonder if the bitter lamentation should be wrung from the Saviour's bosom, as he beholds these, his incorrigible enemies: "O that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace: but now they are hid from thine eyes!"

Another source of the Saviour's commiseration is, *their utterly depraved character*. Their rejection of the Gospel, and their abuse of the means of grace



and salvation, have exerted a powerful and mournful effect upon their state of mind. It is not enough to say that they have become exceedingly sinful, because this is true of all mankind. Not only are they like other men, dead in trespasses and sins, but they are, as it were, entombed in and putrescent with iniquity. Not only is every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts evil, *only* evil continually, but it is under the worst direction, and beyond control. They conduct themselves like men who rush on in their courses of iniquity with absolute recklessness: their wickedness is become depraved and incurable, so that nothing will ever alter or ameliorate it. And need I say that the benevolent and holy Saviour looks down upon such a collection of his creatures with compassion? O it is a mournful survey; and the sight affecteth his heart: and he feels much as he felt when he came within sight of Jerusalem, and turned his thoughts towards that polluted city, that sink of corruption, those depths of disgrace and ignominy, that mass of fermenting iniquity, whose heavy exhalations were constantly ascending towards heaven. O "how has the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed!" How is this beautiful vase dashed and broken! How is the soul, that image of its Maker, that ray from the eternal fountain of intelligence and love—debased, defiled, despoiled, and undone! Ah! how melancholy and affecting the view to see the immortal mind thus poisoned and ruined, without a symptom of reformation or hope of recovery! I know it is true that the Son of God looks upon sin with abhorrence; but it is also true that he looks upon it with pity. He contemplates the character of an incorrigible sinner much as an anxious father, for example, would reflect on the character and course of a heedless, prodigal son, who had turned his back on God, and had given himself up to corruption and disgrace. He would be displeased and irritated; but O, most of all would he be depressed, and weep.

And let us not forget with what peculiar emotions Jesus Christ looks on sin, and how much more afflicting it is to him than to any other being in the universe. Do good men sometimes feel grieved and oppressed, and are they sometimes surprised with feelings of solicitude when they pass over portions of this corrupt earth, and behold scenes which sink and degrade the character of their fellow-men? What, then, must be the feelings of that holy Saviour, before whom the heavens are not clean, when he reflects upon the iniquity of the incorrigible sinner! He alone appreciates it: he alone measures its turpitude; and full well he knows how to weep over it. Long before the world began it affected his mind, and laid heavy upon his heart. The spirit that brought him from the throne of heaven to the shame and infamy of our nature, to the cross and the grave, is peculiarly fitted to feel for their guilty, perishing character. Amid all the reproofs and threatenings that have dropped from his lips, he has never lost his tenderness for them; he has borne with them from year to year, and from age to age, and bears with them still. All that infinite wisdom and love could constantly do to shew them their transgressions, and induce them to wash in the fountain of atoning blood, he has done. And now to see them so vile and degraded, and after all that he has done, wrapped in sin, O it breaks his heart: he weeps over them: and many a time even now, exalted and glorified as he is, would he retire from the honours and praises of his throne, to some celestial bower in Paradise, and weep, if tears could melt the adamantine hearts of his incorrigible enemies.



And this leads me to add, the most affecting fact in the condition of incorrigible sinners is, that *they are devoted to destruction*. This was the doom that awaited Jerusalem: her temporal calamities were premonitory of her perdition: she was ripe for the stroke of justice. Jesus wept over her as devoted to eternal death: and, dear hearers, whether we are willing to receive it or not, this is the certain doom of all incorrigible men. They are bound to endless ruin; as God is true, their undeviating course is, to the chambers of death. This is the doom to which they are fixed. God has expressed his purpose to punish them; and it is a purpose he will never alter.

What shall we say of the blessed and adorable Saviour, who sees all this unspeakable wretchedness? Yes, he is acquainted with it all. He knows the worth of eternity and the soul: he knows what this deathless existence is capable of enjoying and of suffering, and what it must enjoy or suffer throughout interminable ages. He, if I may so speak, has an infinitely higher view, an infinitely deeper impression, of the bitter, undying sorrow that must come upon the men who perish in their sins. We do not know, we cannot tell, what will be lost by losing heaven, nor what will be suffered by plunging into hell. It is impossible for us to look into those regions of darkness, and form any adequate conception of the miseries of the damned. An immortal soul lost! lost for ever! O we know not what it is. The more we try to comprehend the amazing thought, the more amazing and tremendous does it appear. We have no line to sound that fathomless abyss. Could we go to the utmost verge of the earth on which we dwell, and look down, though but for a moment, into the eternal pit, and then come back and tell you of the sorrows of those who die in their sins, O how your hearts would bleed for your dying fellow-men that are without God and without hope! Could some poor reprobate steal the respite but of an hour, and wing his dark way once more to this world of hope and mercy, scarred with the sword of justice, and pale and wan with despair, and tell you of the worm, and the flame, and the angry breath of God, O how would you exclaim, "Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? who among us can inhabit everlasting burnings?" And yet, dear hearers, Christ comprehends it all: he knows how fearful a thing it is. He remembers the hour when he bore the weight of that wrath which bowed down to the earth, and laid low in death, the mighty Word Incarnate. His eye, too, surveys that vast eternity, and takes in all its shores: the dread tribunal before which the miserable sinner must appear; the last sentence which expels him from the divine presence; the world of darkness and despair into which he is going; the weight of wrath, omnipotent wrath, under which he must sink—Jesus sees it all. This creature of immortality, who has just begun, as it were, to live, he sees just beginning to suffer. This creature of immortality, whose faculties are endlessly progressive, he sees just as it begins to expand its powers, beginning to grasp an eternity of woe. This creature of immortality, who might have soared, as on seraph's wings, to the throne and presence of God, he beholds plunging deeper, and deeper, and deeper, to the very bottomless pit. And if grief overwhelmed his holy soul as he drew near to Jerusalem, and his heart with love and kindness, his pure and sensitive mind knew no feeling of cold indifference. Was he touched with sympathy for human suffering, and exquisitely alive to all human woe? Could not all the anthems of the heavenly host

have stopped his flight down to this sad world, when he came on errands of mercy to dying men, and must he not weep now if he sees any of them lost—lost through their own obduracy; lost amidst the richest mercies of salvation; lost even beyond the reach of his redeeming mercy? Never, never did the bosom of a tender mother yearn and throb with compassion over her agonized and dying child, as divine compassion yearns over incorrigible, perishing sinners.

And now, in the conclusion of this discourse, I cannot forbear remarking, in the first place, *how unlike the Spirit of Christ is the apathy of the people of God in view of the perishing condition of impenitent men.* Holy love, my beloved Christian brethren, is kind, and affectionate, and tender, and feels for the woes of men. It was in Christ: that made him weep over the condition of this ruined world; that led him to the garden and the cross. It is in God: his holy soul is one continued, pure, perfect stream of compassion towards this lost and guilty creation. And it is the same in Christians, wherever the spirit of heaven-born pity is not suffocated and strangled for a time by the spirit of the world. It was in Abraham, when he drew near to intercede for Sodom. It was in David when he said, “Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law.” It was in the pensive church in her captivity, when she hung her harp upon the willow, and would not sing the Lord’s song in a strange land. It was in the weeping prophet, when he exclaimed, “O that my head were waters, and mine eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night for the sins of the daughters of my people.” It was in Paul, when he said, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved.” But, O Christians, O ye people of God in this favoured island, where is this heavenly spirit found? O for the heart, and prayers, and influence of such men! O for the spirit of Him that wept over Jerusalem! With cold and characteristic indifference, the first murderer could say, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Not so the disciples of the pitying Saviour. My Christian brethren, would you not be merciful, even as your Father in heaven is merciful? Is it for the child of God to steel his heart against the woes of perishing man? Is it for the redeemed sinner, whose feet have just been taken from the horrible pit and the miry clay, to be insensible to the peril of those who are sinking into the dread abyss? What would be thought of the man who had just been rescued from the angry billows, or the devouring flames, who could stand by and coldly speculate on the danger of those whom he had left struggling on the rock or consuming in the fire? O awake; for the love of Calvary awake; for the love of dying men, Christians, awake. For Zion’s sake awake, and give these dying sinners a place in your hearts, and a remembrance in your efforts and prayers.

“ Did Christ o’er sinners weep,  
And shall our tears be dry?  
Let floods of penitential grief,  
Burst forth from every eye.”

Secondly, our subject strongly enforces, *the importance of a diligent and anxious improvement of the day and means of salvation.* When Christ wept over Jerusalem, her day of mercy was past: the things that belonged to her peace were hidden from her eyes. Dear hearers, you who are estranged from

Jesus Christ, you enjoy, too, seasons and means of grace and salvation. Who *more* than you? Who *richer* than you? The lamp of life with you continues to burn; bibles, and sabbaths, and sanctuaries, and ministers, and mercies, and judgments, all combine to engage you to lay hold on eternal life. Many a time, too, your own conscience has been quickened by the strivings of the Spirit of God, and been roused from its lethargy. There are seasons when you feel dissatisfied here; when every thing around you puts on a new face: when the world retires, and its splendour fades away, and eternity is near. From Sabbath to Sabbath, the mercy of the Gospel is urged upon you with tenderness, and both the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. The Sun of Righteousness rises with healing in his wings; the rains of mercy descend; the fields are white to the harvest. And these are the things belonging to your peace. O that you knew them, that you appreciated them! O that you knew their unspeakable importance to your eternal well being! You have seen how hard it is for a heart dead in sin, and wrapped up in earth, to feel, and fear, and strive to enter in at the strait gate; and when this guilty insensibility with you is in a measure put away, O, hearers, it is the acceptable time, it is the day of salvation. And it is soon gone: a little intentional neglect, a little worldly pleasure, and the Spirit of God is grieved away; and years will probably roll away before such another moment of seriousness, as that which many of you have experienced, will return. And then the love of ease, and self-indulgence, and sloth and indifference, and wealth, and honour, and sensual joy, and vanity, and unbelief, and enmity to God, will harden your hearts, and on every side form vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and before God visits you again, you will have gone down to death and hell: and Christian tenderness and prayer cannot reach you; parental solicitude cannot reach you; ministerial faithfulness cannot reach you; the blood and tears of Jesus cannot reach you; the mighty energy of the Holy Spirit cannot reach you. Now, dear hearers, the ministers of the Gospel can plead with you: they can expostulate with you; they can pray for you; they can sometimes weep over you; they can try to break the spell that binds you to earth, and keep you back a little while from everlasting burnings: they can stand between you and the pit, and elevate their admonitory voice, and supplicate you not to go down and dwell with the devil, and with the damned. And we must weep, even though you turn a deaf ear to our entreaty; we must weep, even though you bid us let you alone: we must do it till you give up your controversy with God, or till you or we give up our last account.

Once more, in view of our subject, we may not avoid the inquiry, *Are there none in this assembly towards whom the Saviour is now exercising the same tender compassion, which he exercised over incorrigible Jerusalem?* Dear hearers, does he not stand in doubt of some of you? Is he not jealous over you with a godly jealousy? As he bends his course this evening, through the suns and stars of yonder firmament to visit this lower sphere, and turn in to this house of prayer, where he has recorded his name, does he discover no incorrigible impenitents, no impending ruin over which he might weep in secret places, for a people whom he has so long kept as the apple of his eye?

Yes, he weeps over the man who would fain persuade himself that all religion is a dream; who soothes and quiets his conscience, and blunts the sting of remorse, by flattering himself there is no hereafter; who has no refuge from the



horrors of despair, but a refuge of lies ; and all whose hopes may soon cease from the light of the living, and vanish for ever. Yes, he weeps over that opposer of religion, and despiser of good men ; that contemner of the Sabbath, and reviler of the Holy Spirit ; who will neither enter into the kingdom himself, nor suffer them that are entering to go in ; who prevents and ridicules the anxieties of others ; whose own heart becomes hard by all the contempt he casts on God and righteousness, and whose progress in sinning is such, that many a good man wonders that his perdition is not sealed this side the grave.

Over that man of wealth, too, he weeps, who clings to his gold ; from whose bosom, toils, and cares, contrivance, activity, and perseverance, shut out God and eternity ; who, like the young man in the Gospel, goes away sorrowful from Christ, because he cannot serve God and Mammon. Yes, he weeps over that companion of fools, who frequents the seat of the scoffer, and the profane, and the idle, and the dissolute, and corrupt, and the faithless. Over that youth who is fascinated with the charms of pleasure, who finds fragrance and flowers in the path that conducts to eternal death ; and whose smooth and rapid course down the stream of time, empties into the burning lake. Yes, over that thoughtless daughter of mirth, too, to whom human life is all sunshine and gaiety, who flutters in the bosom of prosperity, and feeds her vanity by eager expectation, but who is "dead while she liveth," and who, amidst all the expostulations of divine mercy, turns her contemptuous eye on God, and rushes on to ruin and despair. Yes, he weeps over that thoughtless, unawakened hearer of the word, who smiles while others weep, who remains unconcerned while others are anxious, who is quiet and serene while all around him is agitated and alarmed ; in whose bosom impenitence, and unbelief, and enmity to Christ, remain without molestation, and whose conscience is still and quiet, even when the angel of mercy is passing by. He weeps, and tenderly weeps, over the man who has put his hand to the plough and looks back ; who has thrown off his seriousness because he will not be an object of scorn ; who once seemed to have started in the path towards heaven, but who has stumbled at the threshold, and become weary at the length of the way ; and who has now outlived his hopes and his fears, and who will soon become the tenant of that deep eternity, where no Spirit strives, no prayers ascend, and the voice of mercy is gone for ever. Over these, and such as these, he weeps. It is his love, his tenderness, his interposing mercy, and tears, beloved hearers, that have kept you so long from being cut down as cumberers of the ground. He weeps over you ; he bends, perhaps, from heaven, to drop a pitying tear, to take his last farewell, to retire and say, "O that thou hadst known in this thy day, the things that belonged to thy peace."

I only add, in the last place, *if such are the compassions of Christ towards guilty sinners, what confidence may we have that he will save all that come to him.* There are those, if I mistake not, who suppose that they are willing to accept the salvation of the Gospel, but Christ is not willing they should accept it. Anxious and distressed sinners often feel that Jesus has no mercy for them, even though they desire ever so much to be saved. But if he has such a deep and anxious solicitude for those who are incorrigible, tell me why he should refuse his mercy to those who humbly seek his face ? If his heart bleeds and shudders at the prospect of the men who close their ears to the calls of salvation, how is it gratified and cheered with the prospects of those, who will welcome and accept



him? If it gives him pain to see the incorrigible rush on to the gates of death, what joy and gladness does it infuse into his bosom, to see the penitent looking towards his Father's house, and coming into the paradise of God. Beloved hearers, he opens his heart and love to *you to-day: to all of you*. It may be that some of you are halting between two opinions, and he would urge you by all the tenderness of his grace, to banish this halting spirit and follow him. It may be, some of you are thoughtless and slothful, and he would urge you to awake with your whole soul to the bounty of his grace. It may be, that some of you are on the point of resolving that you will venture to reject eternal life, and jeopard your immortality, and run the hazard of eternal ruin and despair: while even now this compassionate Saviour bends in tears over your guilty infatuation, and would fain arrest you ere you seal your doom. It may be, too, that I am speaking to some who are mournful and sad, and fear lest after all they should be rejected and lost: and to you, O he is emphatically reaching forth the arm of help, to bring you into the strong-hold. Wandering sinners, he sees the impending storm, and would gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. The most cruel death he suffered for you. See how he covered you from the pelting tempest, while he himself sunk under its fury. Say, is he not the friend of sinners? Dear, dying hearers, behold that Lamb of God; he came to seek and to save that which is lost: try his faithfulness; prove the tenderness of this Almighty Saviour; see whether he is not able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Repent of all your transgressions: cast yourselves into his arms: repair to his cross. Go to him, and if he frown you will be the first of all the sons and daughters of Adam, who sought his face, and was frowned away. If you find no voice of compassion to greet your return, then come back, and publish the mournful tidings. Tell it to the universe, and it shall roll back its ages of darkness, and be overshadowed with one vast mantle of despair. Tell it to heaven, and their harps shall be unstrung for ever. Tell it to earth, and there ten thousand voices, that are commissioned to assure a guilty world of pardon and peace through Jesus Christ, shall henceforth be silent as the grave. Tell it to hell, and a throb of joy, a note of triumph, rapid as lightning, shall fill those caverns of mourning and death. Dear hearers, no; no; there shall be no such mourning in heaven, and no such jubilee in hell, and, blessed be God, there shall be no such disappointment on the earth: for "him that cometh unto me"—be he whom he may, says this divine Saviour, "I will in no wise cast out."

## THE ASCENSION.

"THE humiliation of the Son of God was now drawing rapidly to a close. He had 'accomplished his decease at Jerusalem:' he had risen victorious from the grave: and, during forty days, he had been living among his disciples—convincing them, 'by many infallible proofs,' that he was indeed restored to life. There remained but one more thing to be done—that for which he had prayed, in John, xvii. 5—'And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.' This prayer, as you have heard in my text, was fulfilled; he 'ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things,' and become Head over his Church for ever.—The text sets before us,

"I. THE LAST ACTS OF THE REDEEMER ON EARTH.

"1. *He selects a suitable place*, from which to take his departure.—He had conversed with his friends at Jerusalem 'in an inner chamber,' 'when the doors were shut . . . for fear of the Jews;' and if secrecy was desirable then, it was now much more so. The last glorious display was not intended for malicious Pharisees, for unbelieving Sadducees and Scribes. Evidence enough had been given to them, and more would hereafter be added. The *public* ministry of Jesus ended with his great sacrifice; and what remains of earthly intercourse shall be devoted exclusively to his friends. He therefore 'led them out' from Jerusalem, 'as far as to Bethany.'

"It has been argued, that this could not be the town of Martha and Mary—because *that* Bethany was two miles from Jerusalem; whereas the Apostles are said to have returned from this sight, only 'a sabbath day's journey'—that is to say, one mile. But why may we not suppose, that he first visited the town of Bethany, even if he did afterwards return part of the way, before he ascended up to heaven? The supposition is far from being improbable; and, if such were the fact, what a touching circumstance was here! He cannot forget Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus! Whom he loveth, 'he loveth unto the end:' and as they are to see him no more, they shall be of those who see him the last. It is one of the manifold proofs of the Saviour's kind affection. Love him, brethren, as that pious family did, and you shall see greater things than this. 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant.'

"2. *He solemnly blesses his disciples*.—He had by his deeds been blessing them, from the first moment of their acquaintance with him; for he had converted their souls, and had instructed them in the things relating to his kingdom. But he now does it by an express outward act. With uplifted hands, he calls on his Father to protect, comfort, sanctify, and prosper them.—If you would know what gifts that blessing included, you may see them fully enumerated in John, xvii.: he could ask no greater—he would ask no less—than are there recorded. 'Neither prayed he for these alone, but for them also which should afterwards believe on him, through their word.' Happy believer! who can by faith see those hands of love still stretched over him, and apply to himself the Saviour's blessing! May such be your privilege and mine: for I wot that he whom thou, Lord, blessest, is blessed indeed.—At length,

"3. *He ascends up to heaven*. Here was no imposition! St. Luke in another place tells us, that the act was done 'while they beheld.' My text describes

the circumstantial order of the event. 'He was parted from them'—literally, 'he stood aside from them;' both to prevent interruption, and that all might see the whole transaction. Then—'he was carried up;' moving towards heaven in full view of the whole party, till, at length, 'a cloud received him out of their sight.' Carried? by whom? By hosts of invisible beings—'angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word.' For now was fulfilled that which was spoken of the Lord by David—'The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive.' Doubtless, there were angels assisting on the occasion; for we find two of them returning in visible form, to comfort the disciples with a promise, that he would hereafter come again in like manner from heaven. As, therefore, we believe that he rose from the dead, so also do we believe that he is 'gone into heaven . . . angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.'

## "II. THE FIRST ACTS OF THE REDEEMED AFTER HIS DEPARTURE.

"1. *They worshipped him.*—Remember that! The appointed teachers of the Christian religion 'worshipped' Christ—it was their very first act, after they had ceased to behold him. And do not suppose that it was merely some respectful inclination of the body—such as is meant in our Marriage service. No—it was holy adoration, as to the invisible God; and accompanied, doubtless, by such words as Thomas was once permitted to use without censure—'My Lord, and my God!' Had they given such honour to the two angels, they would have met with a rebuke like that which St. John afterwards received under similar circumstances—'See thou do it not! . . . worship God!' But in worshipping Jesus, they *did* worship God; and were therefore blameless.

"2. *They were filled with joy—great joy.* O how different from what they had once anticipated! 'Now I go my way to him that sent me; and because I say this, sorrow hath filled your heart.' But now, when he *does* this, they are 'filled with joy.' Whence this difference? It was because Jesus had now opened their understanding, to discern the mystery of his sufferings and his glory. The Comforter, moreover, I am inclined to believe, was immediately sent down with his sanctifying influences; although for his miraculous gifts they had yet to wait ten days longer.

"3. *In the use of appointed means they sought and expected his gifts of grace.* In Jerusalem were they to receive the 'promise of the Father;' therefore they at once returned thither. On their arrival, behold them 'continually in the temple, praising and blessing God!' continually—that is, at every appointed service. Surrounded as they were by formal and ignorant worshippers, how different their views, hopes, and feelings!—Yet such, brethren, as theirs were—such, by divine grace, may yours also be. What though others gain no blessing in public worship, in hearing the word, in the holy communion; yet this need not be the case with you. Only look up to the Lord of the temple, and he will make it a Bethel to your soul. 'In the breaking of bread' Jesus himself shall be 'known of you,' if by faith you seek him. O then, 'enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.'"—REV. J. JOWETT, A.M.

## THE HEAVENLY TEMPLE.

REV. H. MELVILL, A.M.

PERCY CHAPEL, CHARLOTTE STREET, FITZROY SQUARE, MAY 31, 1835.

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“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”—REVELATIONS, xxi. 22.

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THESE words occur, as you may be all aware, in that sublime description of the new Jerusalem, which is given us by St. John, in the conclusion of the book of the Revelations. We are not much concerned, in order to the understanding its import, with the prophetic bearings of the last chapters of this book; seeing that it is admitted on all hands, these chapters describe the future and everlasting blessedness of the righteous: and if this be admitted, we have all that can be gathered from the context towards illustrating the words which are to come under review.

Our text is not the only verse in the chapter which describes the heavenly state by the absence of things with which we are familiar here. We are told that “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.” We have no difficulty in understanding the absence from the new heavens and earth of these consequences of sin; their continuance would be alike inconsistent with the holiness and the happiness of eternity. Again we read that “there shall be no night there.” It were easy to shew many a striking change which this absence of night seems to indicate as having passed upon our nature. Night is emphatically the season of rest; and the saying, “there shall be no night there,” is saying, we shall no longer require periods of repose. At present it is sufficient to prove an individual not human, to prove him capable of existing without sleep, or to adapt himself to the circumstances of a planet whose diurnal rotation should so far differ from our own, that the days and nights are described as three or four times as long. It is a beautiful adaptation of the inhabitant to the dwelling-place, or of the dwelling-place to the inhabitant, that the hours during which man may labour, and those during which he rests, make up the time of the earth’s rotation on its axis.

But there is a great deal involved in the absence of night: without spiritualizing the expression—without endeavouring to show that absence of night is characteristic of the heavenly state; applying it, that is, to the absence of all moral darkness, the unbroken continuance of day-light supposes such an alteration in our construction as, in itself, should make me long for futurity. That there shall be no moment of inactivity, nor seasons of weariness; that no employment will exhaust, no duty prove a burden; that always elastic and vigorous, I shall be always alike ready for searching into the wonders of God—



these are some of the consequences, and make me dwell with delight on the fact, that "there shall be no night there."

But our text is a still more remarkable instance how heaven may be delineated by the absence of things with which we are familiar on earth. We can perceive at once, that it is nothing but our feebleness which causes us to connect pleasurable ideas with the absence of night; and we might be prepared, therefore, to expect, that there would be no night in heaven. But the case is somewhat different in respect of temples or churches. Temples or churches are places in which we specially abstract ourselves from earth, and have fellowship with our Creator and Redeemer in heaven. "How dreadful is this place!" exclaimed Jacob when at Bethel: "this is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven." The public worship of the Almighty, when with one heart and one voice the congregation join in prayer and praise, presents the best image which is to be found within the circle of our creation, of the employment of the redeemed in glory. We know, moreover, that it is through the preaching of his word, that God sends messages to our souls. So that forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, would be abandoning the appointed channels of intercourse between earth and heaven. Hence temples do not seem out of place in sketches of the earth; and we might almost have expected, that when St. John gazed on the Eternal City, he would have beheld it rich in the structures especially consecrated to Deity. And yet, you observe, it is with temples as with night—"I saw *no temple* therein." Or, rather, it is with temples as with the sun and the moon: "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Thus also—"I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." So that, after all, the assertion is not that there is no temple in heaven, but that the place of our earthly sanctuary is supplied in some mysterious, and, perhaps, ineffable manner, by direct manifestations of Deity.

Now it cannot be other than a most interesting and instructive inquiry, that which sets itself to the tracing out the intimations conveyed by the fact, that there is no temple in heaven but the Almighty. We are quite persuaded there lies a vast amount of moral intelligence in such intimations as that of the difference between our two states of being. And however true it may be that the future must be realized before it can be understood, it is equally true that we may remain more ignorant than God designed us to be of its wonders, through neglecting the scattered notices of the Bible, or through omitting to sift their meaning. We are, moreover, induced to occupy you with this subject on the present occasion, because, we think, it will well introduce that appeal to your liberality, which we have undertaken to-day. The object commended to your benevolence, is one which must be dear to all who would uphold Christianity in a neighbourhood; namely, that of supporting a place of worship in connexion with the Established Church, and on which, from unavoidable circumstances, there has long pressed a considerable debt. And in treating of the absence of temples from the heavenly state, we shall be led to dwell so much on their necessity in the earthly, that we believe no topic of address could be better suited than that now chosen, to urge you to co-operate in so holy and righteous an end.

We proceed to consider the use of temples in man's present state. We shall, then, in the second place, consider the absence of temples from his future state. and, in conclusion, apply the whole subject to that cause which now solicits your support.

Now whatever disputes may arise in respect of the spiritual obligation of the Sabbath as a divine institution, it would be hard, we think, to select a single appointment which so manifestly consults the well-being of society. If there were no future world, so that our calculations might be limited to this existence, the Sabbath would still be the most merciful, or rather the most necessary, ordinance, as affording time for the recruiting of minds, which would be certainly worn down by incessant application. We entertain no doubt, though we pretend not to reckon it susceptible of equal demonstration, that just as twenty-four hours is the exact length of time for the return of toil and sleep to mankind, so is one day in seven that precise portion of our lives which should be given to the repair of an overtaken nature. We are not able to prove that one day in three would be more than enough, or that one day in ten would be less than enough, for the preserving in any thing like healthful play the energies of the human machine. But we are so well assured that there are proofs of the nicest adaptation between man and every appointment wherewith man is found to be connected, and which we can trace in great variety of particulars, that we can feel certain that the selection of one day in seven was not arbitrary, but that it was ordered with as exact reference to the wear and tear of our powers, as that distribution of light and darkness which we have already commended to your notice. If you annihilate the Sabbath, and so do away with that fine pause in all the businesses of a stirring community which each seventh day introduces, you will have done more towards rasping down the energies of the nation, than if you had sent mutiny into its armies, and recklessness into its commerce. If the time ever came when each man went day by day to his business, without having a day of rest; and when there was no weekly cessation of bustle in our exchanges, our courts of law, our shops, and our farms, we should have made the nearest approach towards national decrepitude; the powers of every class would be most fearfully overwrought; and we could expect nothing but the speedy giving way of an engine, on all of whose parts there was such an unnatural tension.

But it is to the day as the period in which attention can be given to the concerns of the soul, that the Sabbath is to be revered, and its institution upheld. Those who are engaged in secular concerns will be ready to confess the worth of an arrangement which withdraws them for one day in the week from the deadening atmosphere of profit and loss, and that leaves them at liberty to increase their acquaintance with the things of eternity. We are convinced that God is honoured and served by our faithful discharge of the duties of life; and we do not therefore think, that because a man's occupations are incessant and laborious, he is incapacitated from making great progress in religion. The pious tradesman who makes his godliness a ruling principle in the business and intercourse of life, will unquestionably find his Christianity matured by the business of the week-day as well as by the exercises of the Sabbath. It is nothing better than a calumny on religion, to speak of it as a thing which flourishes in

the cloister and withers in the counting-house. Yet there is a necessity for seasons which shall be especially and exclusively consecrated to God. No man is so spiritual that he can be always in contact with this world, and yet maintain communion with the next: he must have times of abstraction from earth, otherwise he will soon languish in his aspirations after heaven. And if the Sabbath be thus necessary for the well-educated Christian, who shall calculate its importance to the man whose Christianity is as yet only nominal? The Sabbath is a great national barrier against an almost national infidelity: and never will the champions of atheism and profligacy have made such progress towards uprooting Christianity, than in doing away with an institution that fixes a time for the religious instruction of its population. Whilst they leave us the Sabbath, we have something like a fair opportunity for grappling with their machinations: but let once the edict go forth, "No more Sabbath morns are to break in their beauty and blessedness on our cities and villages," and every effort of Christian philanthropy would be immediately paralyzed: and by putting an end to all Sabbath ministrations, the reign of heathenism will almost have commenced; you will have destroyed that vast moral hold, essential to the well-being, and, perhaps, the very existence of the community, which the revealed will of the Creator still possesses over the multitudes who profess not to be in heart and soul Christians.

And in exact proportion as you recognize the worth of the institution of the Sabbath, you will also recognize the necessity that there is for a public provision for its right use and improvement. It would be of little moral benefit to our peasants and our mechanics, that one day in seven should be set apart from business for religion, unless some means of instruction were placed at their disposal. We could expect nothing better than that the time intended for religion would be given to idleness and profligacy, if there were no organized system which brought the lessons of Christianity to almost their own doors. A Sabbath without churches would be a day of open licentiousness, rather than even the appearance of devotion. And you might leave untouched the ordinance of the Sabbath, yea, and enforce with the utmost carefulness, its outward observance, so that in the high way of traffic there should be the quietness, and the bustle of our crowded streets should be exchanged for the listlessness of the village: but if there is to be no public gathering of the people, and if, in the hushing of other sounds, you hush the bell that calls men to the solemn assembly, and thus take away from us that music which ushers in each Sabbath's morn, and which seems to chime to us of heaven, we fear and believe you would leave the land overspread with a godless population: and in providing a season of leisure, without assisting them to use it to heavenly purposes, you would strengthen a hundred-fold the growth of impiety, by giving it clearer space for its development. Our churches were designed, and ought to serve, as schools of theology—seminaries in which multitudes who every day but the Sabbath are immersed in secular occupations, may be instructed in the ordinances and duties of religion.

We are quite certain of many a village pastor in our land, that he has been instrumental through his Sabbath ministrations, in sending a system of sound, practical divinity into all the cottages of his parish. During the week he can scarcely gain access to any of his parishioners, except the young and the sick;

the rest are occupied from morning till night, and have no time to give to their minister's instructions. But then comes the Sabbath-morn, and with it the instructive book, which tells the husbandman and the agriculturist the way to heaven. There is a spectacle yet to be seen in our community—that of the villagers flocking from different parts of the scattered hamlet, their little groups dotting the fields in every direction, and all going up to the rustic church, girt round with the graves of their fathers—which it were vain to look for under any other arrangement. The pastor can thus bring to bear all that influence which, unless every good feeling is exiled from our valleys, will make the faithful parish priest one of the most powerful of rulers: for is he not associated in the minds of his people with every birth, every marriage, and every funeral, so that all that is joyous, and all that is sorrowful in the annals of the village, seems to claim him as a party concerned? It will bring to bear all his influence on his congregation; and in discoursing to them on successive Sabbaths of successive truths of Christianity, he will prevail to giving them a soberer theological information; so that numbers will grow well instructed in the disclosures of the Bible; and that mainly under the blessing of the Almighty through the working of the two-fold arrangement—that there is a Sabbath which they are required to keep, and that there are churches to which they may repair.

But over and above these almost self-evident reasons why there must be churches in our earthly state, preaching is the appointed ordinance of God on a day when he gathers in his people. A season set apart solely for divine worship is not of human device, but possesses all the sanctions derived from the known will of our Creator. And then when we assemble ourselves in the church we bring ourselves into the position in which God hath directed that those who seek acquaintance with himself shall be placed, and we are looking through the channels in which they are especially promised. It is therefore in no sense optional, we say, if it were not on the principles of the Bible, whether or no there shall be churches in our land, and whether or no we shall resort to them for worship; seeing that were we to do away with all arrangements for the public worship of God, we cut ourselves off from the only appointed means of grace, and could expect nothing else but the rapid decay of individual piety. While tabernacling on earth, and therefore able to see only through a glass darkly, we must obtain our knowledge of God from other modes than that of immediate communion. These modes must be such as God is pleased to appoint; inasmuch as seeing the benefit sought is wholly gratuitous, the method of distribution must be left to the Giver: and while it is directed that we forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, and whilst it is promised that “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” we know it to be our duty to rear temples to Jehovah, and claim it as our privilege to go up to the house of the Lord.

But it is comparatively easy to dilate on the use of temples in man's present state: we pass on to more difficult matter, and would consider, in the second place, **THE ABSENCE OF TEMPLES FROM MAN'S FUTURE STATE.** This is the chief thing commended to our attention in the words of the text. But what we have advanced is not irrelevant to the chief object of the discourse; seeing that if we would ascertain why there are no temples in heaven, the simple course is



to shew why there are on earth, and why it is our duty to attend them. We shall pursue this plan : but what we mainly wish, is, not the explaining the absence of temples, but rather the abstracting from such fact the truths it seems intended to convey. We shall not therefore be over solicitous as to preserving the logical order of our discourse.

We will observe, then, *what changes must have passed upon our condition ere temples may be swept away without injury, nay, rather, with great benefit, to vital religion.* If we have at all described the character of this change, it is evident we shall have made advances towards ascertaining that celestial and sublime change whereof all shall be the subjects who are admitted as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. But if there were no longer any necessity for Sabbaths, there would be, at the least, a much diminished necessity for churches. If our population were all righteous ; all so deeply imbued with godliness, that they made every day, in some broad sense, a Sabbath, and every place a sanctuary, there would be comparatively but little requirement that we consecrate, in a special manner, certain seasons and certain structures. The only supposition on which we can decline to dedicate to God one day in seven is, that of our dedicating all the seven : and if there ever come such a jubilee time to this earth, that every man might be said to walk with God, the whole earth being turned into one mighty sanctuary, and its whole tenantry into one worshipping assembly—so that in all its circle the sun should only shine on families devotedly engaged in the high work of magnifying their Maker ; then, undoubtedly, the institution of the Sabbath might be no longer required ; and only on the principle that in place of a sabbatical day the world now kept a sabbatical week. Yea, and we could not draw a richer picture of regenerated earth than by just supposing such an extension of Sabbaths as alone would render safe the removal of churches. There is not a single feature, whether of moral or physical loveliness, which appears not in the sketch which is outlined by this supposition. I know that if man required not to be summoned at stated seasons to worship his God, it would only be because his whole life was one unbroken act of prayer and praise to the Almighty. I know that if there were never occasions when he needed to be called off from the transitory and the perishable, it could be because the scene around him had become impregnated with eternity ; that it might be affirmed of him that he was so circumstanced as to walk by sight, and no longer by faith. And hence, too, I also know, that if man could safely dispense with churches, as being able safely to dispense with Sabbaths, then must he be where every thing around him breathed with Deity ; where every creature with whom he held converse served and loved the Redeemer ; where there was no exposure to temptation, and where nothing that defileth could ever gain admission.

Therefore yet further I find a beautiful description of the heavenly state in the statement of St. John, that he saw no temple there. It tells me there is no keeping of the earthly Sabbaths, for all its days alike are holiness to the Lord : and telling me this it also tells me, that if once admitted within the gates of pearl, and privileged to tread the streets of gold, I shall be free from every remainder of corruption ; I shall no longer need external ordinances to remind me of my allegiance, and strengthen me for conflict ; but that, made equal to the angels, I shall love God without wavering, and serve God without weariness.

It tells me that eternity is one unbroken Sabbath ; and one unbroken Sabbath it could not be to me, if I were not endowed with the noblest powers, immeasurably removed from all that hath intercourse with sin, and circled by scenery, and mingling with companions, and presenting no impress, but that which burns and breathes of Deity. It could not be that every day and every moment throughout unnumbered ages should be one of that perfect dedication to our Maker, which is faintly imaged by the holiest services of the earthly Sabbath, if it were not that I should be imperishable and spiritual, myself a temple, immortality oneness with the Saviour. Therefore, however a human pencil, striving to delineate the heavenly Jerusalem, might have intermingled sanctuaries and palaces, and crowned the city with that diadem of towers which tells of dwelling-places reared for Him whom the universe cannot contain; there is more, far more, to me in the total want of sacred architecture, than the rich profusion of dome and steeple with which man would have crested the heavenly metropolis. And though poetry, if bidden to pour its melodies on the home of the saints, might have drawn its imagery from what is most celestial on earth, and have spoken of the *courts* of the Lord's house, and the *tabernacles* crowned with the mystic insignia of a present Deity—nothing could have been so eloquent to me of the deep tranquillities and purities of heaven, and nothing could have so told me of one uniform, cloudless, blessed Sabbath, as the simple announcement of St. John, “ And I saw no temple there.”

Now, up to this point we have confined ourselves to the supposition that there would be no Sabbaths when churches were no longer needed ; shewing you that to represent heaven without a temple, is virtually to represent it as one entire temple, seeing that it represents eternity as one unbroken Sabbath. It is, however, when we consider churches as the places in which we are to gain acquaintance with God, that we find most of interesting truth in the fact that there is no temple in heaven. The evangelist, John, accounts for the absence of temples, or rather states how their place is supplied : “ And I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” We think it impossible to read these words, and not immediately perceive that the mode of our gathering in divine knowledge hereafter shall be widely different from that prescribed us whilst on earth. Allowed not direct and immediate intercourse with God, we can now only avail ourselves of instituted means, and hope to obtain in the use of ordinances faint glimpses of that Being who withdraws himself majestically from the searchings of his creatures. And we may not doubt that God shall everlastingly continue a mystery to all finite intelligences ; so that we look not in the favoured expatiations of the future for perfect acquaintance with Deity. We rather take it as a self-evident truth, that God can be comprehensible by none other but God ; and that consequently there will always be between the Creator and the created that immeasurable separation which forbids all approach to familiar inspection.

But nevertheless, we may not doubt, that although God must be inscrutable even to the angel and the archangel, there are disclosures of Deity made to these illustrious orders of being such as we ourselves are neither permitted nor qualified to enjoy. The manifestation of Godhead in that to us unknown region which we designate heaven, and to those ranks of subsistences which we believe

associated highest in the scale of creation, must be, we are sure, of that intense-ness and that vividness, which give to intercourse the character of direct and personal communion.

To such manifestations we ourselves are privileged to expect admission. We guard against the thought of limiting Deity to place, and circumscribing him within the boundaries of any scene however splendid; just as though He who must be equally every where, fixes his person and dominion in one sublime and favoured section of the universe. But where God is pleased to shew himself most, there, without violence to truth, we may speak of God as especially present: and they who gain entrance into this scene (wheresoever it be) of splendid manifestations, may be affirmed, in a sense, to behold God—and none but them; to see God face to face, and to speak to him as a man speaks with his friend. And over and above such direct exhibitions of Godhead as are perhaps inconceivable by us whilst yet in the flesh, we know that Christ in his glorified humanity moves to and fro through the assemblies of heaven: and we believe that, being the image of the invisible God, they who see the Son in the magnificence of his exaltation, may be said to see the Father also. So that we introduce nothing at variance with the correctest notions of Deity, as the Omnipresent and the Inscrutable, when we refer to the New Jerusalem, as the place in which man may converse directly with his Maker, and, seeing no longer through a glass darkly, enjoy the blessedness of open communion. This it is which seems symbolically taught by the statement, that the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of the heavenly city. It shall not be needful in order to advance in acquaintance with the Deity, that the saints gather themselves into a material sanctuary, and hearken to the teaching of one of their brethren, and partake of sacramental elements. They can go to the fountain head, and therefore require not those channels through which living streams were before time transmitted. Present with the Lord, they need no emblem of his presence: faith having given place to sight, the apparatus of outward ordinances vanishes, like the shadows of the law when the substance had appeared.

We cannot find words in which to express our thoughts of the grandeur and the imagery which represents the Almighty as the temple of the city. A temple filled with Godhead—its walls his attributes, its roof his majesty, its gates his eternity! And to worship in this temple; to live in this temple; to worship God *in* God—O there is a wonderfulness here which is not to be overtaken in all our strivings! For who can imagine to himself the everlasting Creator condescending to become as a sanctuary to the children of men; the gorgeous cathedral, into whose recesses they may penetrate, and at whose altars they may do homage? We can feel, O God, that the universe is thy temple: we are overwhelmed by the thought that Thou wilt be the temple of the universe. Yet let not the majesty of the statement prevent our taking to ourselves its comfort and its instruction. In place of going up to the house of God, I am to go up hereafter to God himself: the house of God is to be God. This is the grand change in passing from the terrestrial to the celestial: and I cannot hear of such change without feeling I shall no longer be taught through the ministry of my brethren, and the instrumentality of ordinances: but that I shall be privileged to gather in knowledge from as much of actual inspection and immediate communing, as consists with the difference between the finite and

the Infinite. If, indeed, the mind can ever entertain such thought, what a mysterious and thrilling alteration would be made in the face of this present assembly, if the preacher's voice were suddenly hushed, and in its stead there were heard a sound, whose might and melodiousness proclaimed it not of this earth; and if, yet further, the structure within which we are gathered, losing all aspects of material, perishable matter, were converted into one brilliant manifestation of Godhead—its walls composed of the sapphire and the cloud, and the solemn and the splendid coruscations of righteousness and truth; and justice, and love, and kindness, mingling themselves for its roof! Who shall tell me the emotion of every heart, whilst in the temple it saw nothing but Deity embodied; and the voice of the Eternal One made mention of solemn things, and august, and fearful, and magnificent? Who amongst those who are following on with all diligence to know the Lord, would not feel, even after the trials of his present estate, the coldness and the poverty of the best earthly ministrations, and long, with an ardour such as never yet had glowed within his breast, to be thus again, as it were, enshrined in Deity, and again taught immortality by Him who was, and is, and is to come? You shall not long in vain: if there be faithfulness in the delineations which Scripture gives of the heavenly Jerusalem, the Almighty himself and the Lamb shall be the temple of that glorious city. And therefore, the inhabitants, in place of assembling as now in churches made with hands, shall be for ever encircled and occupied by fresh displays of divinity; while the Mediator, moving continually through their ranks, shall unravel the intricate and unfold the mysterious.

There is much in the figurative sketch which represents man as nobly elevated amongst the orders of being, and of the sublimest knowledge as thrown open to his searching. Man is elevated in his powers for the ordinance and institution—an introductory state to the open vision and free intercourse of spirits who never sullied their immortality. The sublimest knowledge is made accessible; for with God as his temple, along what aisle of the stupendous edifice could he pass, and not collect from every column and every arch, truths which in the infancy of his being his blessed Lord has suggested? Where could he stand, and not hear the pervading spirit of this Sanctuary, breathing out secrets which he had in vain striven to explain, and wonders which he could not have dared to conquer? And then, if it be blessed to know that, hereafter set free from all the trammels of the elemental dispensation, we shall take our place in the beautiful mansions of Paradise, amongst the nobles of creation; that gifted with capacities, and privileged with opportunities for deriving from immediate contact with Deity, acquaintance with all that is majestic in the universe, we shall need no longer these means of grace, which, while they strengthen, prove us not made perfect; yea, if it be blessed to know this—to know that, though now we see through a glass darkly, hereafter we shall see face to face—that though now we know only in part, hereafter we shall know even as we are known: O then it is a blessed thing to hear, that there shall be no temples in the heavenly Jerusalem! The substitution of God for the *house* of God is the most energetic representation of a change which elevates man into dignity, and gives a height and a depth to the survey. And he feels, therefore, that so far as the ripening of his powers is concerned, or the moral splendour of his hereafter, or the freedom of his expatiations is described, he



will live exulting himself in the announcement of the evangelist, that he "saw no temple" in the heavenly city: "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

But we may not enlarge further on this topic, though it tempts us to enlarge, and proposes most attractive material for a lengthened discourse. We are, in conclusion, to apply the whole subject to that interesting cause, which is asking support from those gathered within its walls. It must follow from the foregoing statement, that both from the nature of the case, and from the appointment of God, it is essential to the very existence of a community, that provision should be made for public worship. We have shown you, that a land without churches must become especially a land without Sabbaths: so that taking from our population the public means of religious instruction, would be the readiest method of uprooting Christianity from our pale. And if you admit this, then when an appeal is made to you in support of the simple object of increasing or sustaining the amount of church accommodation in an overgrown neighbourhood, we see not how any who wish well to the best interests of their fellow men, can withhold their contributions, or will tender none but a niggard aid. In nothing has our Church Establishment been so wanting, as in the not endeavouring to provide that the increase of Church accommodation might, in some degree, keep pace with the increase of our population. The inhabitants of our parishes multiply from tens to thousands; and the single small parish church is still expected to contain them, and the single parish priest to attend to their spiritual necessities. The result has been unavoidable: in crowded districts, large multitudes have been alienated from the Establishment, just because the Establishment itself had practically excluded them from her pale.

We thankfully admit, that within the last few years, vigorous efforts have been made towards repairing and enlarging the sanctuaries. New churches have been built, and old enlarged; so that there has been a great reduction in the disproportion (which is still quite appalling,) between our population and the means of religious instruction. But while this disproportion is so vast as it is, there must be no relaxing in our endeavours to supply places of public worship. A chapel such as this in which we are assembled, and towards the support of which we ask you to contribute, is not precisely on the footing which we could desire as an ecclesiastical structure. We are daily and increasingly persuaded that every approach towards what is called "the voluntary system," is to be deprecated by those who wish well to the progress of Christianity in a land. We would not have a minister dependant for his bread on his hearers; for we are certain, that, in a variety of cases, this dependence is likely to tell injuriously on his faithfulness. We would not have him exposed to the temptation of compromising truth, lest it should offend his supporters. It may accord with the maxims of the times, that the clergyman should be kept like the tradesman, in the power of those whom he serves; so that if he gives not satisfaction, he may be quickly dismissed: but we have to argue, that the vast majority of men, however competent to judge the tradesman's goods, are quite incompetent to judge the clergyman's doctrines. And, therefore, what they dislike, will generally be that for which the preacher will obtain the most commendation. The very thing for which the tradesmen would be commended, would be for

serving them well ; but the clergyman would be discarded for serving them well, inasmuch as he can scarcely serve them well without giving them offence. We might be advocates for the voluntary system were our whole population already converted : but we cannot contemplate it without dread, knowing its inefficacy for the conversion of that population. We are frank, therefore, in acknowledging, that if we had our choice, we would not have chapels constituted as is this, in connexion with our Establishment. But we have no choice : do away with the system of chapels in the metropolis and its environs, and you diminish most fearfully the amount of our church accommodation. The system has risen from the pressing urgency of the case, and whatever its evils, must be supported for the sake of the vastly more than counterbalancing good.

We call on you, therefore, for a demonstration, that you are so alive to the worth of Sabbath ministrations, and so conscious of the efficacy of that system of religious instruction which the Established Church prescribes, that you will not allow those who maintain the worship, to be straitened for want of support. You will remember that after this chapel had been long occupied by a zealous and admirable minister, whose praise is in all the churches, there seemed the greatest likelihood that its connexion with the Establishment would be dissolved, and the building itself be used for secular purposes : and I only wish to know, whether a grievous moral injury, an injury which it is not possible to calculate, would not have been inflicted on the neighbourhood, if the Sabbath-bell had ceased to ring from this structure, and the house of God had been desecrated into a school or manufactory. Is it nothing that the Gospel shall be brought to the doors of numbers who might otherwise have said that they had no opportunity of hearing it ? Is it nothing that the minister is traversing a district overrun with pauperism, and where otherwise there might have been a complete abandonment of the sorrowful and the dying ? Is it nothing that the children of the destitute are sought out, and guided with carefulness and Christian instruction, who might otherwise have been left to grow up in ignorance and vice ? The claims of this chapel on your liberality are just to be measured by the disastrous consequences which must have followed on its being no longer used as a place of public worship. It was to prevent this, that Christian men generously came forward, and, at their own risk, consecrated the place afresh to the Lord. The only question then is, Can you be backward in contributing to a cause which has the highest and loftiest sanctions on its side ? We rejoice to say, that much has been already done towards liquidating the debt on this chapel ; but there is still great need to appeal to the liberality of the Christian public. We trust the appeal, so far as this day is concerned, will not be made in vain. I own I feel great interest in the matter ; and I would gladly communicate that interest to all who hear me. I feel great interest, because in this place I commenced my own ministration in the Metropolis. I feel great interest, because I know, that had not the present pastor stepped forward at the crisis to which I have alluded, a place in which the Gospel of Christ has long been faithfully and affectionately preached, would have been withdrawn from this neighbourhood, and a great gap made in the moral advantages of a densely populated district : and I have no idea of the burden being left on those who were bold in meeting the exigency. A public good has been done, and public benevolence should supply the wanted means. We therefore put it to you to demonstrate that you know the import-

ance of dedicating structures to the service of God, and the worth of those ordinances which our apostolical church dispenses.

We have no time to add more. The contrast between earth and heaven is this—that there are temples in the one, and none in the other. If our aspirations be towards that eternal city, of which the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple, we shall long that our families, that our neighbours, that our countrymen, may go up with us. Nothing, indeed, that is human will be excluded from our solitudes; but our *first* anxieties will be given to our own land and our own parish. Remember, it is through the ministrations of the sanctuary that God ordinarily trains men for heaven: and you will aid in effecting the noble result, by providing that every man may have his Sabbath as a day of rest, and his church where he may do homage to his Maker. In contributing to the necessities of this chapel, you are contributing towards the achievement of those noble results; and I therefore confidently commend the cause to your conscience, in the sight of a heart-searching God.

## THE INVITATION OF THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE.

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REV. T. MORTIMER, B.D

ST. MARK'S CHURCH, PENTONVILLE, JUNE 7, 1835.

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“ And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—  
REVELATIONS, xxii. 17.

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THERE are two interpretations of this text; neither of which I conceive would be wrong. The words may, without impropriety, be applied to a verse that goes some little distance before, where the Lord Jesus testifies of his own coming—“ Behold I come quickly.” And the words of the text may, I conceive, without any impropriety, be interpreted and expounded as applying to that event: the Spirit saying “ Come;” and the bride—the Church—saying, “ Come;” and they who are athirst for spiritual blessings saying “ Come.” This is one interpretation of the text.

But there is another which I conceive equally proper, and which, indeed, I am disposed the rather to take, because the latter part of the verse seems more properly to agree with it; namely, this—the Spirit inviting to a participation of Gospel blessings. The Spirit says, “ Come.” The Church, the bride, says, “ Come.” And he that heareth is directed to say, “ Come:” as he listens to the word himself, and as he goes, he is to say to others, “ Come, come;” inviting all around him to come and participate. And he that is athirst is to come; and whosoever will is welcome to come and drink of the water of life freely.

In this latter sense, then, let us consider the text. I call it a splendid text; for it is so. O brethren, when we read the Bible, which we oft and again do, we wish that our sermons could keep pace with these blessed truths; and we wish that he would assist us by his grace and Holy Spirit, that we might so explain, so enforce, and ourselves so enjoy, these passages, that, by God's blessing resting upon us, we with you, and you with us, may at length attain unto eternal life, and praise God and the Lamb for ever. “ And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.” It is he, and he alone, who can make poor worms like unto us “ able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.”

Now, then, before we begin the sermon, I would wish, either in so many words, or else, at least, in synonymous terms, to say to the people, one and all, Lift up your hearts: and then our hope in God is, that you silently are echoing back the voice, if not in the words of our church, in the spirit of the response



of the holy communion service, where the priest says to the people, "Lift up your hearts;" and the people reply, "We lift them up unto the Lord." As much as to say, "We know what you are; you are only a poor dying man like ourselves, who when you have delivered your message will be laid low in the grave; but our eyes are up to the Lord. May there be the sound of your Master's feet behind you. We know you will be a blessing: we look not to you, but to the God that sent you." That is the exact point to which we would bring you; to which we desire to bring you.

Now, then, look to the text. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely." The text divides itself into three parts: the first, what is said by the Spirit: secondly, what ought to be said by him that heareth, and by him that is athirst: and, thirdly, what may be said to all: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

We are first to consider, WHAT IS SAID BY THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE, OR THE CHURCH. "The Spirit and the bride say, *Come*." There is another spirit; a spirit of a very opposite character, who never yet invited man to come to Christ, or to take salvation. If I might so speak, I would say, that it is the master effort, the great business of the very existence of Satan, to prevent men from coming to Christ, and receiving spiritual blessings. This is, then, a spirit that never whispered in your hearts, "Come unto Christ; come and receive of the water of life."

But there is the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of the living God; the Holy Ghost; the Comforter; the Sanctifier: and he says "Come." Remember *who* he is; equal with the Father and the Son. Do not slight the invitation; you may repent if you do: thousands have repented, and will repent for ever, that they slighted it. "The Spirit saith, Come." The Holy Ghost knows how much some of you need to come: for our great sin, let me tell you, and our great misery with some of us—our great sin, and our great misery, and our great folly—has been this—we have kept away. And what are we the better? Some of us have tried to hew out to ourselves cisterns; but they have been broken cisterns; they could hold no water. Some of you have sought—you know you have—your happiness in earthly good; in wealth, or in pleasure, or in what this world had to bestow. And yet you dare not think of your grave; you dare not think of another world. No; you feel, that whatever be your present state, it is not a sound state, it is not a safe state, and ought not to be a happy state, and is not a happy state. To you the Spirit says "Come." "Ho, every one that thirsteth"—you know what comes next; would to God you had a heart to listen to it—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Let me tell you, my dear people, that the soul of man, though sullied and dishonoured, as Dr. Young beautifully expresses it, is

"still divine!"

Dim miniature of greatness absolute!"

There is enough in the soul of man, even in its wreck, even in its ruin, to tell us what a noble thing it is, what a mighty thing it is, what a vast and glorious thing it is. Yes, if it had not been such, the Son of God would never have wasted his blood in redeeming it.

The Spirit then says "Come:" and in your hearts some of you feel your want and misery. Some of you are ready to say, "I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes; I deserve to be cast out." The Holy Spirit says, "Come, come, come:" and in his name we reiterate the request and the invitation.

But further, *the Church*—that is, *the bride*—says "Come." And if the Spirit says "Come," the Church has no right to say any thing else. It is the great business of the Church to echo the voice of its Lord. What mean the varied opportunities in this Christian and Protestant land? Four times this day, blessed be God! have our church bells gone, to call the people to come and worship; to call the people to come and drink the living waters. Yes, the Church, the bride, says, "Come." Is it only to-day? No; you shall hear those bells to-morrow morning, soon after six o'clock: and if the young, and healthy, and strong, choose to turn in their beds, and go fast asleep, instead of coming and worshipping, let them do it; but remember, the church bell says, "Come, come, come, and welcome, to the streams of salvation." And then at noon-day, that we may suit those who are invalids, or those who cannot get out at any other part of the day, the church again shall sound her bell, and call you to prayers and a sermon. Yes, and while we live, and while God gives us health and strength, and while we can lift our hands or open our lips, we will say, "Come;" we will invite you to come. And we shall think ourselves happy if, in our dying moments, we can but call out to those around us, while we commend our soul to our Saviour, if we can call upon our people to come to that Saviour.

"Happy if, with my latest breath,  
I may but gasp His name;  
Preach him to all, and cry in death,  
Behold, behold, the Lamb!"

The bride, the Church, says, "Come." And why? Because she knows how dear the soul of man is to the Lord who bought it. Joined, as she is, to her Lord, in the closest and dearest bond, she yet cries for her brothers and her sisters scattered up and down in this wide world: and, true to her character and her duty, she echoes the voice of the Spirit; and when the Spirit says "Come," the Church takes up the word, and says "Come" too; "Come and welcome."

So much for what the Spirit and the bride do say. Let us now, in the second place, consider WHAT THOSE WHO HEAR, AND THOSE WHO ARE ATHIRST, ARE DIRECTED TO SAY. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come."

"*Him that heareth.*" Depend upon it, as soon as a man sets out in good earnest for heaven himself, he wishes to take other people along with him: and I should have a very poor opinion of the religion of that man who would be quite contented to go to heaven a solitary individual, and see no one in the blessed path before him, and see no one in the blessed path following close upon

his heels ; but quite contented to go to heaven the only one of his race. Such an one I should greatly fear was deceiving himself : for I find all the holy prophets wanted to take all they possibly could along with them. The Old Testament prophets, you remember, were the Old Testament preachers : and what a fine race of preachers they were ! How nobly did Isaiah preach ! How nobly did Jeremiah preach ; how nobly did Daniel preach. And the substance of all their preaching was this—that the people should *come* to the Lord. And under the New Testament dispensation it is the same thing ; for though the way to heaven be a narrow one, it is not so narrow but that two, and more than two, may walk to heaven together ; though it be so narrow, there is room in it, blessed be God, for you and for me.

Now, then, as we hear, and attend to what we hear, and hearken to what we hear, and obey what we hear, at the same time *we are to call to others*. Now, then, I have many here to-night of those who have recently been confirmed. Blessed be God, concerning many such I have every reason to believe, and had every reason to believe, that they were in good earnest about their souls, and were seeking the Lord, and had obeyed the voice, “Come.” But it is not enough that you come yourselves ; I must have the word sounded in your ears, “Let him that heareth say, Come.” You have a friend, perhaps ; tell him to come : a brother, who has not come ; tell him to come : a sister who has not come ; ask her to come : a father, perhaps, who is growing old, but who has not taken the first step in coming to Christ ; ask him to come : or a mother—ask her to come. If we acted in this way, common sense must tell you what would be the result—that is, what would be the result if God gave the blessing. Why the result must be this : if the Lord blessed us we should double the number of our conversions every year. And what then ? Why then we should be forced to have the sacrament every Sunday ; for we could not enlarge any more ; we could not have our rail larger. We should have such a throng of communicants that we should be forced to have the sacrament every Lord’s day. And though it might be labour to your clergy, I would to God that time were come. That used to be the Church of England way : our Church makes this provision for her members, that if any competent number of persons were to signify a wish to their minister to receive the Lord’s Supper every Sabbath day, we could not, by the laws of our Church, refuse it you. O when shall that day come, dear hearers, when every member of our Church shall be sounding out the word to somebody else, “Come ?” “Let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come.”

Are you obeying this voice ? Remember how short the time may be that you may have to use it. Some persons intend, very religiously and piously, when they are on their death-beds, O then they will say much, they think, to surviving friends, and surrounding relatives. And how do you know that you will have your senses then to do it ? The dear Christian man, whom I mentioned to you as having been so suddenly removed from us last week, and whom I visited when he was in a state of insensibility, could not, if he had had many relatives and friends who were worldly, have spoken a word to them ; they must have come to see him die ; they could not come to hear him pray or talk. Choose, then, your opportunities while you have them : take care that they are not lost. And you who hear the Gospel, who receive it, believe it, and obey it ; **as**

you go to heaven yourselves, open wide your arms to others, and say, "Come along with us, for we will do you good: for we are going to a place concerning which the Lord hath said unto us that he will give it to us."

I turn, in the last place, to notice THE INVITATION ITSELF

First specially, then universally. First, *specially*: "Let him that is athirst come." And then *universally*: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

There is a strange perversion in human nature, which continues even in those who are partially religious; and I know of nothing in which that perversity shews itself more clearly than in this—that every discovery which the Holy Ghost makes unto us of the corruption of our hearts, of the depravity of our nature, of the power of indwelling sin, and of the need of a greater, deeper, and a mightier work of the Holy Ghost on our hearts, in order to our obtaining full salvation—these very discoveries, in some cases, drive people into a state of despondency. The Christian says, "Alas, alas! I am so full of infirmity. I am so continually overtaken by sin. The evil which I would not do, that which I hate, alas! that I still do: and the good which I would do, that, alas! I often neglect to do." And was not this the case with the blessed Apostle Paul himself? and is not this the case with every real and devoted Christian, more or less? What I mean is, if you *long* for spiritual blessings, then it is your own fault if you do not obtain them; for the text says, "Let him that is athirst come."

Now some of you have to-day been longing after a Pentecostal blessing; have none of you received it? Then I have been mistaken. I could not help hoping, whilst we were commemorating the death of our Saviour, while we were inviting the aid, and presence, and grace of the Holy Spirit, I could not help hoping that some of you were receiving it. And I will hope, till I am convinced to the contrary; and it is not a little that shall or can convince me to the contrary. Why? Because I know the promise: "Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them." Because I know the promise: "If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give the Spirit to them that ask him?" And I cannot help hoping and believing, that no one in this church has been asking and not receiving; been knocking at the door of mercies, and found it shut, and not open to him: for I know who said, "Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

Cultivate spiritual desires: "He will fulfil the desires of them that fear him." Some of you are young beginners: you have only just set out. The shield is quite new upon your arm; it has never been battled yet: the sword has never yet been turned against the foe. But through grace you have buckled on the shield; and through grace you have taken the sword in your hand. Now, then, go forth, and the Lord of Hosts go with you. We would say to you, as Saul did to David, when with a sling and a stone he went to meet the Philistine, "Go, and the Lord be with you." May you live to fight many a noble battle for your Lord, when death shall have taken our shield from our arm, and our sword out of our hand:



“ For children's children ever find  
Thy word of promise sure.”

We long to see religion so spreading in your different families, that piety may appear to go down from generation to generation ; and thus furnish the highest call for thanksgiving and prayer

But suppose the case, that there should be any not included in any of the foregoing invitations. Suppose the case of any poor burdened spirit, who may be ready to say, “ Ah, Sir, you have said nothing to me.” Wait a moment, and see what the text will say. Or there may be some soul, feeling such a sense of weakness and misery, that it is ready to think, “ I have never been specially invited.” But look at the text ; “ Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Does this look—I am going to use a strong expression, and one that I would not often use—I ask, Does this look as if God Almighty wished to damn any one of you ? Does it not look as if he were ready to save you all ? Then, in God's name, what is to prevent your being all saved ? And what a glorious thing it would be, if one could hope and believe, that the greater part of the present audience were actually in a state of salvation !

O, my brethren, we know full well, and from time to time we declare unto you, the doctrine of the divine sovereignty ; that it is “ not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but God that sheweth mercy ;” and that “ by grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God . not of works, lest any man should boast.” And at times some may be ready to say, “ How is it that one time you speak of man's moral agency, and at another time of God's sovereignty : how do you reconcile them ?” Why we do not attempt to do it. As a fine writer, now gone to heaven, once remarked, “ They are two things, as plainly and clearly set down in the Bible as any other doctrine of the Bible. We see not where they meet : but we believe, that far above, out of our sight, they form a beautiful arch, to the glory and praise of the great Architect of the world and of the Church.” We understand not how to reconcile these two ; but we preach them both ; and this night we say unto you, in the name of him that sent us, “ And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

## THE LORD GOD A SUN AND SHIELD.

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REV. T. DUNN,

FOOT'S CRAY, KENT, MAY 10, 1835.

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“For the Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”—PSALM lxxxiv. 11.

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A CHRISTIAN is distinguished for his attachment to the sanctuary. This attachment is the fruit of divine influence, and by that influence it is animated and maintained. Hence the sanctuary of the Most High is, to a believer, like a little heaven below: rather would he be a door-keeper within its hallowed precincts, than occupy a throne of state: turning from the riches and honours of time, his renewed nature will prompt him to say, “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after—to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his holy temple.” And there is every thing to justify the believer’s cherished and glowing attachment to the means of grace; for it is in the sanctuary that the God of love records his name. There he promises to come in all the benign manifestations of his gracious character: there he deigns to bless: there the accents of mercy are heard, the ministry of reconciliation is proclaimed, spiritual illumination is imparted, heavenly consolation enjoyed, a sense of pardon realized: the fetters of sin and chains of inbred corruption are there broken: the trials and sorrows of mortality are there frequently lost sight of: while there the earnest of the incorruptible inheritance is granted.

It is not surprising, then, that the renewed mind should glow with desire for communion with the Living God, even as the thirsty hart panteth after the refreshing stream; nor surprising that the Psalmist should say, “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord.” There he had realized spiritual blessings, had seen his guilt cancelled, had eaten heavenly manna, had beheld the light of the knowledge of the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. Hence the expression of his intense solicitude to have these enjoyments repeated. All that the earth could impart of delight and joy was within his reach; yet he declares his readiness to resign it for a day in the courts of the Lord, because in his ordinances the Lord God is a sun and shield, giving grace and glory (in its earnest and foretaste) and withholding no good thing. O I could wish that each one now assembled felt an equal regard to the means of grace, that you were in the spirit on this day, hungering and thirsting after righteousness! It is a state of mind connected with the holiest delight, issuing in communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, and therefore most earnestly to be

desired: while the absence of this state of mind proclaims that spiritual life is unknown, that spiritual blessings and joys have never been experienced. Our grief is intensely excited by the recollection of the vast numbers in every district that altogether neglect the ordinances of divine appointment; nor can we refrain from weeping in spirit over those who, while they attend, are apathetic and indifferent: satisfied with the form, while destitute of the reality of religion. Alas! you enter the house of God, but it is not to you the gate of heaven; for the voice of prayer was not previously uttered, that you might behold the beauty of the Lord, and drink of the river the streams whereof make glad the city of God. It is not surprising, then, that you continue through the exercise, and retire at its termination unenlightened and unsanctified. O, we beseech you, deprecate this indifference to the ordinances of the Gospel, and fervently entreat its removal. The sanctuary is appointed to be to you what the Pool of Bethesda, was to the sick and dying. As that was the chosen spot for their recovery, so the sanctuary is the place in which the healing of your diseased spirit is to be begun and perfected. Of Zion it shall be said, "This and that man was born in her." O, desire then, when the Sabbath dawns, that it may be to you a day of spiritual feasting and holy joy; that when you attend the means of grace you may enjoy the grace of the means; that when you regard the ordinances of heaven's appointment, you may realize intimate communion with the God of ordinances! "For the Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Here we are furnished, first, with a description of what the Lord God is to his people; and, secondly, with a declaration of what he will do for them.

First, **WHAT THE LORD GOD IS TO HIS PEOPLE:** He is "a sun and shield."

In attempting to exhibit to you the beauty and appropriateness of this metaphorical language, I remark, first, that the Lord God is a Sun, *enlightening the dark mind*. The natural sun is the source of light: this heavenly luminary disperses the gloomy horrors of the night, and forms our day. In this it is emblematical of the influence of the Sun of Righteousness. In order to form a just conception of man, you must imagine a being over whose understanding there is a veil of thick darkness; whose mental vision is beclouded and impervious to the light of heaven; so that he has no correct view of the extent and spirituality of the divine law, no realizing consciousness of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, or the unceasing suffering to which he stands exposed in consequence of being infected therewith. Such is man by nature: his mind, once the receptacle of spiritual light, is now benighted, gloomy, and dark: even what he does discern is perceived through a false medium. Hence he calls that *prudence* which is declared by Holy Scripture to be *covetousness*, that *proper dignity* which it denounces as *abominable pride*, that *allowable* which it *reprobates*, that a doing God *service* which it affirms to be *odious* in his sight. So that we find it written, "Darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." "There is none that understandeth, that seeketh after God." Observation and experience demonstrate that the human mind is enveloped in a thick mantle of ignorance, prejudice, and unconcern; many are so blinded by the god of this world that they are hewing out to themselves cisterns that can hold no water; are seeking

repose on a bed that is too narrow for them; are striving to adorn themselves with a garment that is too short for them; are crying "Peace, peace;" but so miserably short-sighted are they, that they see not the pit of destruction that is yawning to receive them. They are very earnestly asking, "Who will shew us any good?" but are so benighted, they cannot perceive that a full, an overflowing, an ever-increasing, an immortal felicity, can result only from the light of the divine countenance. Many, too, have the Bible in their hands, the ordinances of religion administered amongst them, the great truths of revelation and the principle of the everlasting Gospel exhibited in all their glory and majesty, and the lamp of reason to shed its concurrent ray over the stupendous facts which inspiration hath disclosed to their view, while the destinies of eternity hover with mysterious and awful majesty over the scenes of their future prospects to stimulate their inquiries and quicken their apprehensions; in addition to which, the great teacher, Death, reads his monitory lessons in their ears, and the proceedings of the last judgment are announced to them in terms replete with terror and alarm, that their illumination may be effected: and yet they are still found to walk in darkness, advancing along the path of guilt and sin, with all the indifference and composure of the most perfect blindness, though every step they take brings them nearer and still nearer to destruction.

There is, then, abundant proof that men by nature are destitute of spiritual perception; and indeed that they are unaffected by the darkness in which they are enveloped. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world; but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Such is the mournful condition of the human race through the triumph effected over us by our arch adversary. Nor is this moral gloom cleared away until the Sun of Righteousness arises and rests upon the spirit with power and energy divine. Then the clouds of ignorance, the mists of error and depravity are dispersed; then the moral chaos is converted into the radiance of noon-day; thus illuminated, the sinner perceives an enormity in his transgressions such as he never before supposed them to possess; he learns to say with the Apostle, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Or with Job, "I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He sees himself infected and defiled by sin, in every mental affection, that his sins have subjected him to endless suffering, that justice is inflexible, and that the penalty he has incurred must be enforced: but the beam of heavenly light resting upon the opaque mass, not only discovers to the sinner his danger, but reveals to his admiring and delighted view a door of hope in the valley of Achor; it shews him an open fountain, the efficacy of whose waters can cleanse away his every stain; exhibits to him a most gracious friend who is able and willing to take away his guilt, bring in everlasting righteousness for his justification, and finally, conduct him to yon unearthly temple in the skies, where he may enjoy the long and splendid glories of an everlasting day.

The change, therefore, effected by illuminating grace, while it humbles and abases the sinner, eventually introduces him to the experience of refined and exalted happiness. It is like the beauty and pleasure which the rising morning



diffuses over the earth after a night of storm and darkness ; it is so much of heaven let into the chambers of the soul ; it is a light that carries with it a divine heat and life, causing the existence and ascendancy of holiness, hope, peace, and joy, where impurity, despair, discord, and misery formerly prevailed. O, my hearers ! has this ray of light divine penetrated your dark minds ? Are you that “ once were darkness,” now “ light in the Lord ? ” It cannot be if you are not conscious of sin, mourning its existence, dreading its prevalence, and sighing for its extirpation. It cannot be if you are not admiring the light of the world, and desiring its enlightening beams to guide you all your journey through. But if this is your happy case, you may, and you will say, with adoring gratitude, “ Whereas I was blind, now I see.”

Secondly, the Lord God is a Sun, *fertilizing the barren mind*. The natural sun is not only the fountain of light—it is the source of fruitfulness : without its vivifying influence universal barrenness would pervade our earth—nay, universal death ; but by its enlivening rays your barns are filled with plenty, your presses burst out with new wine, and all nature wears the hue of gladness and delight.

What the natural sun is in this respect to the vegetable world, that, and infinitely more, is the Sun of Righteousness to the moral world. By its influence the barren mind is fertilized, and all the fruits of heavenly grace produced. The sterility of the heart of man is naturally as entire and universal as its darkness : it is so unfruitful that one good thought, one holy desire, never grew spontaneously there ; and were an eternity to pass over it in its unchanged state, it would be an eternity unlovely, unproductive, and void of celestial fruit. The sterility of the eastern desert or of the barren rock is not surpassed by the sterility of the human heart. The Most High looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. While, therefore, it is affectingly true that the roots and weeds of pride, passion, anger, and all ungodliness, grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength, still the fruits of righteousness are wholly withered and gone—the hand of sin, and the concurrent depravity of man, having uprooted every plant of celestial growth ; so that we are without beauty, void of fragrance, as the thorns and briers of the desert—nigh unto cursing, and whose end is to be burned. This alarming state of sterility and barrenness, however, passes away when the Sun of Righteousness arises upon the spirit, with healing under his wings : in regeneration the fallow ground of the human heart is broken up ; then the incorruptible seed is sown ; then the wilderness becomes like a fruitful field, the desert resembles the garden of the Lord, the cumberer of the ground becomes a tree of Righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to shew that he is gracious. Instead of the thorn, there is the fir-tree ; instead of the brier, there is the myrtle-tree : and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. For as the fir and myrtle are evergreens, so the Spirit thus fertilized shall have its fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. In every such case the divinely gracious promise is fulfilled, “ I will be as the dew unto Israel : he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon : his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine : the scent thereof shall be

as the wine of Lebanon." "Ephraim shall say, What have I any more to do with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir-tree: from me is thy fruit found."

Thus the mind upon which the celestial Sun doth shine is pre-eminently enriched and beautified: every grace springs up; the once wretched spirit appears gay and blooming; the libertine becomes continent, the churl bountiful, the debauchee pure, the blasphemer devout: the formalist in religion is induced to worship God in spirit and truth: the bitterest enemy of the cross is transformed into the humble, devoted follower of the Redeemer; vanity is succeeded by seriousness; carnality by a deep solicitude for the welfare of the immortal spirit; the once useless, nay, injurious member of society, becomes a blessing to himself and to others.

The comparison instituted in the text is still further descriptive of the tender mercy of the Lord God to his people as he, thirdly, *consoles the cheerless mind*.

The presence of the natural sun not only makes our day and fertilizes our earth; it is also in an eminent degree a source of comfort. Were we deprived of its genial warmth, life would be a misery and burden insupportable. How welcome its heat, how reviving its powerful beams, when the earth is bound by frost, or covered with snow! Then we enter into the truth of the wise man's declaration, "A pleasant thing it is to behold the sun." From it all natural delight arises. At this season of the year what gaiety, pleasure, and innocent vivacity it infuses into animals! what vigour and beauty into the herbage of the fields! Equally cheering and reviving are the sweet rays of the Sun of Righteousness to a sin-burdened conscience: it is the smile of our Redeemer indeed that fills heaven itself with ecstatic joy; and the light of the Divine Countenance imparts unutterable consolation to the Church of God in its militant state. Then it is we take down our harp from the willow; then it is we are strengthened to run the race set before us; then it is the broken heart is healed, the wounded conscience restored; then it is that the pleasures of sin are divested of their alluring qualities, and sin itself, thus stripped of its enticements, becomes disgusting to our sight. "Its pleasures are no more to be compared with those resulting from a sense of the divine favour, than the pale light of morning faintly gleaming in the East, is to be compared to the exhilarating brightness of the meridian sun; or the trifling and unsatisfying enjoyments we can call our own, in this state of probationary and fleeting existence, to the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore."

It is the distinguishing nature of Christian joy that it for ever palls the taste for every carnal enjoyment; the living water which the adorable Saviour imparts to the thirsty spirit is of that satisfying nature, that those who drink of it never thirst again. O there is nothing like the sweet rays of the Sun of Righteousness to make the soul happy! God is the believer's joy, his exceeding great reward. "I will go in unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: for he is the health of my countenance and my God."

" The opening heavens around me shine,  
With beams of heavenly grace;  
While Jesus shews that he is mine,  
And whispers I am his."

And when the joy of the believer is interrupted by sudden gusts of temptation, or severe trials and extensive losses, or the bursting out of the corrupt fountain of his own depraved heart; when he is apparently sinking in the deep waters, and ready to exclaim, "All these things are against me;" it is the beam of heavenly mercy that dissipates the gloom, that dries up his tears, that takes away his sackcloth, that gives him beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Thus the Lord God proves himself to be a Sun consoling the cheerless mind. It is but for a little moment that he hides his face; he revisits the soul he loves; restores the joys of his salvation: and by the application of his promises and witness of his Spirit, diffuses a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory: when this is the happy case that sublime song is again adopted, "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength; he also is become my salvation."

But the inspired writer instructs us also that **THE LORD GOD IS THE SHIELD OF HIS PEOPLE**. According to the ancient usages and modes of warfare, the shield was a piece of defensive armour, generally constructed of wood, or leather, then overlaid with plates of brass, silver, or gold, according to the dignity and resources of the warrior. Its design was to defend the combatant from the spear or sword of his adversary.

This piece of armour in a striking and beautiful manner illustrates the preserving goodness of God to his people. He is their shield, *protecting them from the sword of divine wrath*. The unalterable requisition of the righteous law of heaven had gone forth, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." To this curse man stood exposed; justice (armed with power to cast the rebel sinner into the fire and agony that endureth for ever) was sent in pursuit of him; the dire conflict was on the point of commencing; but the matchless and incomparable grace of the ever-blessed Jesus, the everlasting Son of the Father, induced him to interpose, and by becoming our shield to effect our rescue. He saw the hand of Justice uplifted, and the sword of the Almighty's vengeance on the point of piercing the sinner's heart; when, filled with ineffable love, he exclaimed, "Father, stay thine avenging hand, behold, I give my life for the life of my people. I voluntarily and readily consent to shed my blood as their ransom." Having thus offered himself as their sacrifice and shield, the Eternal Father accepted his mediatory work on their behalf, and the command was given, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones."

Thus from the thunders of Mount Sinai, from the curses of heaven's violated law, does the Lord the Redeemer shield his people; he received that stroke which, had it alighted on us, would have consigned us to irremediable woe. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." Was ever love like this—

so undeserved, so amazing, so divine? It is the wonder of heaven, the glory of the universal Church, and will be the theme of praise to a redeemed universe throughout eternal ages.

The Lord God is the shield of his people *from their spiritual adversaries*. We have many invisible enemies arrayed against us; but neither their number, nor their prowess, should strike us with dismay, for thus saith the omnipotent Leader of Israel, "They shall fight against thee, but they shall not hurt thee; for I am with thee to defend thee. No weapon formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth up in judgment I will condemn." The same gracious assurance is addressed to you as was addressed to the father of the faithful: "Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Vain then is the persecutor's rage; utterly vain and futile the machinations of Satan; and groundless all your fears and doubts: the Lord is your shield on the right hand and on the left: he defends you by night and by day; preserves your graces; protects your spiritual life from the harrassing and vexatious assaults of every enemy; every thing of a holy nature which his love imparts, his omnipotence continues and upholds. Cease to wonder, therefore, that the faith of Peter was not abstracted from him; cease to wonder that Daniel was safe and happy in the lion's den; cease to wonder that Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego remained unhurt in the fiery flame; cease to wonder that the Church should outstride every storm; or that

"The weakest saint should win the day,  
Though death and hell obstruct the way."

The Lord is the shield of his people: this unravels the mystery: this insures the safety of the weak and harrassed believer; and as the shield is braced to the arm of the warrior throughout the entire combat, even until the triumph is gained, so the Lord will continue to shield his people until every foe is vanquished, and the crown of immortal life is conferred. "I give unto you eternal life: they shall never perish, nor shall any man pluck them out of my hands," is one out of many of the glorious promises of your omniscient and omnipotent Redeemer.

Secondly, we have in the text A DELIGHTFUL DECLARATION OF WHAT GOD WILL DO FOR HIS PEOPLE: "He will give grace, and glory, and withhold no good thing."

First, he will give *grace*: and there is no gift can be compared with this. Precious and eminently desirable is the gift of health, of sight, of reason, of wisdom; but these gifts sink into insignificance when contrasted with the gift of heavenly grace. O Gospel hearer, had you the wealth of Cræsus, the wisdom of Solomon, the empire of Alexander, the skill of Archimedes, without grace you must be for ever miserable, the outcast of heaven, the tenant of hell. Yea, could you command the spacious earth, and the more boundless sea, without grace you will be a wretch undone, separated from holy angels, consigned with devils and fallen spirits in the blackness of darkness for ever. Let me entreat you then, by all that is solemn and momentous, to supplicate this heavenly boon, so essential to present peace and future felicity. You are actually invited and encouraged to entreat its bestowment: God will give his holy Spirit in answer



to humble, continued prayer : and will you not instantly and unceasingly implore its communication ? Will you perish when salvation is attainable ? Will you remain indifferent and unanxious for the blessings of eternity, when they are revealed and imparted without money and without price ? O hasten to the mercy-seat : seek, and ye shall find.

“ The Lord will give grace :” First, he gives the *principle* of grace ; this heavenly bequest is received in conversion, then the light of heaven irradiates the dark mind ; then the reign of sin terminates ; then the desire of the heart is turned to the Lord and the remembrance of his name ; then the knee is bent in prayer, and the cry excited, “ What must I do to be saved ?” Then that prayer is answered, salvation is bestowed, the spirit is beautified with the image of its Creator, and Redeemer, and begins to mirror those beauties to all around. O the blessed change grace produces ! There is no stain which it does not ultimately efface, no idol which it does not dethrone, no excellency which it does not create. What it did for the Corinthians, it does for all who come under its benign influence ; for such were some of you ; but now ye are washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

“ Grace taught my soul to pray,  
And made mine eyes o’erflow ;  
’Twas grace that led me to the Lamb,  
And will not let me go.”

Secondly, The Lord *encourages* the growth of grace. As the Christian advances in the divine life he has new duties to perform, new trials to bear, new temptations to overcome ; and that these duties may not be neglected, that these trials may not overwhelm, that these temptations may not destroy, fresh supplies of grace are required ; and these supplies are condescendingly imparted : “ The Lord giveth more grace,” says the Apostle James. He is to the believer what the head is to the members, what the root is to the branches, the fountain to the stream ; he directs, preserves, and animates. Hence the members do not become lifeless, the branches do not wither, the stream fails not to flow. The fact is, all our wants as Christians have been foreseen, equally with those by which we can be affected as creatures, and in our divine Immanuel (as in a vast treasury), wisdom, knowledge, strength, holiness, and joy are accumulated as a rich portion for the universal church. “ It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell,” and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. This exhaustless fulness of spiritual blessings is in our divine Lord, for the purpose of distribution. There is a throne erected to which we are invited, and encouraged to come, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in the time of need. Daily and hourly to that throne you may go without any apprehension of being sent empty away ; for the most legible inscription it contains is, “ Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run and not be weary ; they shall walk and not faint. Among men the having bestowed one favour is often pleaded as a reason for declining to impart another ; but the God of all grace permits and instructs you to infer from every thing which his love imparts, how ready he is to accept and bless you, as often as you renew your approaches to

his mercy-seat, and to account each gift at once an expression of his kindness, and a pledge of future good.

This assures us, then, of the final perseverance of the saints. He who begins the good work carries it on to the end : he imparts not only enlightening grace, but quickening, strengthening, sanctifying grace ; grace assuring us that our pardon is sealed, our redemption advancing, our heaven secure. You may remember an illustration of this reviving fact in the *Pilgrim's Progress* : Christian, in the house of the Interpreter, had his attention directed to a column of fire on which water was perpetually thrown, and yet the flame continued to ascend. Surprised at this anomaly, Christian eagerly requested information as to the cause of the astonishing event that was transpiring before him, the Interpreter thereupon conducted him to the back of the flame, where he saw a person incessantly administering oil ; so that while the heat of the flame was occasionally abated, the flame itself remained unquenchable. It is precisely so with the principle of grace : there is a power incessantly employed to suppress it, but unseen there is a mightier agency at work to maintain it, therefore it continues quenchless and indestructible. " Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will carry it on to the day of Jesus Christ."

Thirdly, the Lord will reward the *combat* of grace. When grace is conveyed to the immortal spirit, the principles of sin, which prevailed there previous to its entrance rise up in opposition to it : there is consequently a perpetual strife in the believer's soul ; the flesh lusteth against the spirit, while the spirit striveth against the flesh ; as when a prince, who has had long possession of a certain territory, will marshal his forces and summon his energies to keep off any opposing power : so the principles of evil wage interminable war with the principles of holiness ; " I find then," said an apostle, " a law that when I would do good evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

In reference to this conflict the holiest delight is excited : by the consciousness, that however severe, or long protracted, victory will at last crown the Christian soldier—grace shall reign through righteousness and eternal life. O Christian, you shall come off more than a conqueror through Him that hath loved you ; shall tread upon the neck of all your adversaries ; shall rise and soar above these impure regions into the holy and peaceful paradise of divine love ; shall cease to groan, being burdened. Unfettered and free, you shall behold the extirpation of every source of annoyance and grief, adorned in the splendid robes of sinless purity, and beautified with the crown of life, you shall enjoy eternal repose in the pavilion of the King of kings.

" Sin your worst enemy before,  
Shall vex your eyes and ears no more ;  
Your inward foes shall all be slain,  
Nor Satan break your peace again."

Far beyond this fading scene, then, the blessings of salvation reach. Hence it is added " The Lord will give glory." Indeed, beloved brethren, there is an inseparable connexion between grace and the unspeakable felicity of the heavenly

state: *grace* is the bud, *glory* the flower in full bloom: *grace* is the dawn, *glory* the noontide splendour of a long and everlasting day; *grace* is an introduction to the threshold of heaven, *glory* the actual possession and enjoyment of the promised inheritance. "The Lord will give *glory*." O ye tried and tempted followers of the Lamb, here is a reviving and rapturous assurance for you, a portion unspeakably, inconceivably rich; a portion, of which your own unworthiness cannot deprive you, and which the craft and malignity of your enemies can never wrest from you. "The Lord will give *glory*." Let this infallible assurance for ever check, yea, exterminate, a murmuring and repining spirit under present trials and dispensations. "The Lord will give *glory*:" present to him, then, unceasing adoration while you live, and act as the expectants and heirs of such an inheritance.

"The Lord will give *glory*." That is, first, *the glory for which grace prepares*. Grace produces a moral renovation, a divine and spiritual transformation: it operates as sacred leaven to produce love to purity, an aversion to iniquity, a desire for spiritual and holy exercises: it qualifies for the uninterrupted enjoyment of the divine favour: it creates a solicitude for the total abolition of the reign and being of sin: it enkindles desire for an eternity of intercourse with a virtuous and sanctified universe: these desires and feelings, enkindled by heavenly grace, shall all be realized. "Blessed are the pure in heart, they shall *see God*." O Christian, you have desired to be "without spot, wrinkle, blemish, or any such thing;" to be relieved from the possibility of displeasing your heavenly Father; to mingle with holy and pure spirits in that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand, and those pleasures which are there for evermore. Rejoice, then, for these desires shall all be fulfilled, without ceasing: therefore, give thanks unto the Father, which hath made you "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

Secondly, the Lord will give you *the glory which the saints in heaven now enjoy*. Our conceptions of the glory which the redeemed around the throne now possess, must, of course, be dim and imperfect: to describe it fully would require the presence of an angel, or one of themselves, rather than a frail, sinful creature on earth. This, however, we know—their knowledge is perfect, their purity complete, their rapture unbounded, their bliss ever increasing; for the Lamb in the midst of the throne feeds them, and leads them to fountains of living waters. Alas! how dissimilar are our circumstances when we attempt to love God; when, by the alluring discoveries of his grace, we try to raise our affections to heavenly things! What sinful damps and coldness hang heavy upon us! What counter allurements are we painfully conscious of! What estrangement from God! How inanimate and feeble our love!

" Our spirits can neither fly nor go  
To reach eternal things."

We come before God with our prayer and praises, but our thoughts wander in the midst of our worship and speed away to the ends of the earth: and even when, through the tender mercy of God, we in his temple realize a little elevation of soul, a glimpse of heaven, a sip of the brook by the way, we return to the world and almost forget the delights of the sanctuary. Let us rejoice, however, that the day of our redemption from these sources of distress is

rapidly approaching. Like those who have entered into the heavenly rest, we shall be in peaceful, in joyous scenes; no cloud will interpose, no melancholy brood, no shade of darkness arise. The reconciled countenance of our heavenly Father will beam eternal brightness: every moment we shall taste his love and live upon it in all the rich varieties of its manifestations; and throughout the length of our immortality there shall not be the least cessation of its enjoyment.

Thirdly, The Lord God will give glory: that is, *the glory which he has promised*. The promise of eternal life is one of the principal promises of divine revelation. To this all the other promises tend; here they all centre and terminate. The joy of the Apostle Paul was excited by the consideration of this fact; he exulted "in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, hath promised before the world began." We call upon you, therefore, devoutly and frequently to meditate on the exceeding great and precious promises of inspiration: they unfold and proclaim the glory which God will give. View those promises in all their amplitude and extent: each one of them is to be fulfilled, every iota verified. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle shall not pass away from these promises, till all be accomplished—the immensity, the infinity of joy, knowledge, purity, love, and dignity they teach you to expect shall all be conferred. Your "Sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw her light: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

Fourthly, The Lord will give glory: that is, *the glory that exceeds all conception*. We can imagine what is meant by the glory awarded to a devoted philanthropist, an enlightened statesman, a victorious general, or a patriot king; but who can estimate the glory to be awarded to the professors of grace? When kingdoms, crowns, and sceptres are no more, that glory will remain: when the gay creation is stripped of its clothing, the groves divested of their foliage, and the valleys of their flowery pride—when the sun, moon, and stars shall go out in everlasting midnight—that glory will be inconceivably great. When the clangour of the archangel's trumpet shall be heard, and the opening graves give up their dead, that glory will be developed, and will astonish by its brightness and magnitude. When the great white throne is sublimely reared in the midst of the universe of God, and the Almighty Judge shall invite the sanctified myriads at his right hand, to inherit the kingdom prepared for them, then shall that glory enrapture and felicitate, and prove itself to be beyond all finite, or angelic conception, an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And thus it shall continue

" While life, or thought, or being last,  
Or immortality endure."

And what is equally indicative of the energy of divine love, the Lord will not withhold from you while advancing to that glory, any good thing. It is not said he will not withhold any *pleasant* thing, but no *good* thing. Whatever is good in its nature, or in its effects, whether at the moment it be pleasing or painful, whether it be indulgence or correction, prevention or enjoyment, it shall not be withheld. "He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Is grace



and glory your portion, and can you suppose that bread and water will be denied to you? Have you all spiritual blessings in heavenly places by Christ Jesus, and can you suppose that inferior blessings will be unconferred? Impossible! "Be careful for nothing, then; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." He will withhold no good thing: then,

First: *no necessary instruction.* There is, we admit, a great diversity in the intellectual attainments of the people of God: some are versed in astronomy, others shine in different departments of science; some are celebrated as linguists, like the lamented Greenfield; others are distinguished as poets, like the immortal Watts; a few are capacitated to guide the destinies of empire, like David and Hezekiah: but the great majority are uninformed in worldly science, and destitute of such capabilities, for "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence." The Lord imparts to his people, however, such a measure of enlightening grace, that they become wise to salvation; they speak the language of Canaan; know Him whom to know is life everlasting. That promise is ever fulfilled, "All thy people shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children." They do not fail to discover the evil of sin, the worth of the Saviour's righteousness, the harmony of divine truth, the glory and immortality of the divine perfections, the interesting offices and characters of their glorious Surety as their Prophet, Priest, King, Physician, Shepherd, Head, Forerunner, Advocate, Saviour, and Judge. They do not fail to discover their need of the agency of the Holy Spirit, to quicken them to works of faith, and labours of love, to fortify them against temptation, to assist them in prayer, to impart consolation, to bear witness to their adoption, and destination to the mansions of unfading glory. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, whereby ye know all things." "God hath hidden these things from the wise and prudent, but hath revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." If, therefore, the unlettered Christian is taught and led into the path of life, is instructed to choose the good and refuse the evil, if qualified to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, if enabled to

" read his title clear  
To mansions in the skies,"

no good thing, no necessary instruction is withheld from him.

Secondly: the Lord will withhold no good thing: that is, *no needful correction.* It is not impossible that your mind may decline in its attachment to spiritual things; your Bible may be neglected, and your closet too: favoured with prosperity, you may think more frequently of the streams than of the fountain from which they flow: and if ever you are guilty of this folly and impiety, then you may justly apprehend some corrective providence to awaken you to a sense of your guilt and danger in forsaking the fountain of living waters. "If my people," saith the eternal and gracious God, "forsake my law, then will I visit their iniquities with a rod, and their transgressions with stripes; but my loving-kindness will I not take away, nor suffer my faithfulness

to fail." And O, is it not better to be chastened and reformed *now*, than to be unreclaimed from a ruinous course and destroyed *hereafter*? We say with the Apostle, "No chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, it yieldeth afterward the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." If the cup of earthly joy is snatched from your hand, and you are induced thereby to drink more frequently of that river, the streams of which make glad the city of God; if the loss of health, or children, or property, endear to you the true riches, make you a more frequent attendant at the throne of grace, and a more humble and diligent student of the mysteries of redemption, it is a good thing for you: it will turn to your account, and furnish materials for praise throughout eternity. But if you would avoid suffering, you must abstain from sinning; grieve not the Holy Spirit of God; then your peace shall be as a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea. O, aspire, unceasingly aspire to live this life: it will ensure to you the smile of divine complacency: it will throw a halo of light and peace around your path, inferior only to that realized by the blessed around the throne.

If, however, I address afflicted and sorrowful Christians, recollect your afflictions and sorrows are the fruits of your sins. Learn, then, to say with David, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have rebelled against him." You are placed in the crucible that your purification may thereby be effected; that you may come forth from the furnace as gold seven times purified. Seek, then, assiduously seek, this result of your trials: then will you be able to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted: the bitter was sweet, the medicine food. Happy affliction, that weaned me from the world, from self, from sense and sin; that fixed my attention on things above. No good thing was withheld, because no needful correction was withheld."

Thirdly: the Lord will withhold *no requisite support*. It were easy to advance proof of this position did the limits of this service allow. David was conscious of its truth when he sang the twenty-third Psalm: all departed believers have proved its truth and reality: and numberless promises forbid you to entertain the slightest doubt in reference thereto. Lift up the voice of praise, then: "As your day so shall your strength be:" "When thou passest through the waters, I," saith the Lord, "will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon you." In the comprehensive words of the text, "No good thing shall be withheld from you." Such is the ample and illustrious portion of those that walk uprightly; that is, of those whose hearts are changed, whose motives are pure, whose lives are upright, who walk with God. And this portion is theirs not *because* of their walking uprightly: the power to walk uprightly is an imparted power; it cannot, therefore, be the procuring cause of any blessing, much less of every blessing. Still it is equally true that your enjoyment of God will ever be in proportion to your watchfulness and spirituality of mind. If you walk contrary to God he will walk contrary to you.

Put off the works of darkness, then, with hatred and determination: walk in the light of truth and holiness: heaven and glory are at hand: wait and watch

for the bright and morning star, for Jesus and the resurrection. The light of faith shews you the dawning of that day when, upborne on some angel wing, you shall pass through the outer court of the starry heavens into the regions of the blessed. There you shall be nourished with the bread of heaven, and indulged to drink of the sweet streams of everlasting happiness, at the marriage-supper of the Lamb: which may the God of love and mercy grant. Amen.

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